

INSIDE

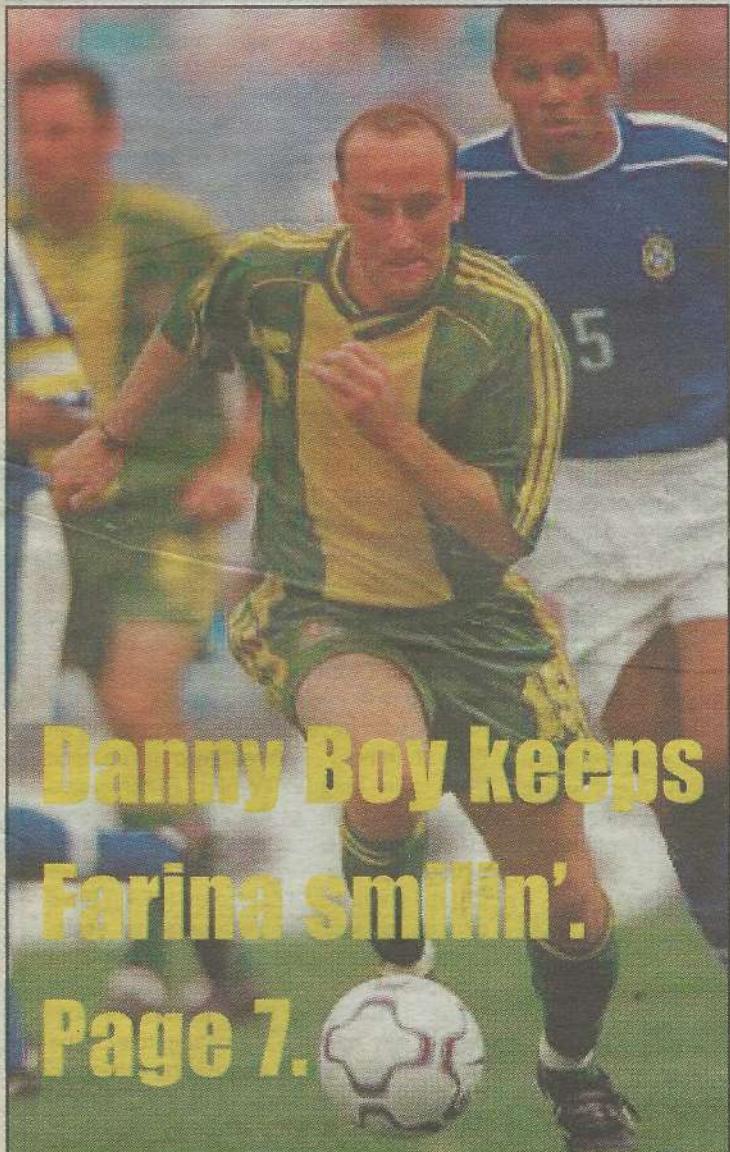
Your quality Australian weekly soccer paper for the new millennium

SOCCER

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CRUNCH TIME: SA FEELS CLUBS' HEAT



Danny Boy keeps
Farina smilin'.
Page 7.

Seven weeks ago Soccer Australia - at the behest of its stakeholders - seemed intent on reforming the structure and composition of the NSL for the start of season 2000/2001.

Despite an alarming lack of detail the national body was firm on implementing much-needed reforms to a stalling NSL. And, as Inside Soccer pointed out two weeks ago, SocAus got the principle right, but the practicality and substance was, to most objective observers, less than satisfactory.

Last Saturday the NSL executive met with Soccer Australia's board to thrash out the issues that concerned them.

Tony Labbozzetta, speaking on behalf of the NSL executive, felt confident that the clubs had a fair hearing and was quietly confident that the reform agenda would be delayed.

"We presented our case to the board. They (the board) have formed a sub-committee and I am looking forward to a favourable outcome.

"There were a number of issues, the moratorium on the changes and the manner of assessment for example. Soccer Australia gave us a good reception and the issues were addressed.

"Some felt the changes were hurried and the issues did not have enough time to be looked at, and so Soccer Australia is now looking at our concerns," he added.

Soccer Australia is expected to make a final decision some time around their AGM, on February 28.

Perth Glory Chairman Nick Tana concurred with Labbozzetta's views. "I'm not going to pre-empt Soccer Australia. I don't believe a one-year moratorium is going to matter too much to Perth Glory, and under that scenario if it is better for all clubs then that

is good for the game. Obviously though we all want change as soon as possible ... it's Soccer Australia's call."

Soccer Australia Chairman Basil Scarsella did not give too much away. "The board has made a final decision but the clubs have asked for a delaying of that decision. We are listening to their arguments because we don't want to take the game through a period of negative publicity and costly legal battles, so we are listening to them.

"I believe a second division can be successful because it gives motivation to state clubs with promotion and relegation."

This is not a view shared by a number of the NSL club representatives, who believe it is not a sustainable or feasible option at this point.

"The important thing," added Scarsella, "is that the reform takes place. Until someone makes a decision these reforms are never going to happen. We will continue to meet with the executive until we can come to an agreement that everyone is happy with."

While it is encouraging that Soccer Australia is fostering more communication within the game (they also have regular meetings with the NSL GMs), one GM told Inside Soccer: "Decisions are made by Soccer Australia on behalf of the clubs with us having very little say. Soccer Australia is the laughing stock of other sports bodies ... it is poorly run from top down. And there is no way we can devote time to addressing these NSL criteria in such a short period of time (March 31)."

Another GM said he felt the NSL should be run as a separate body to Soccer Australia.

In other news, sources say the marketing of the NSL has been awarded - on a handshake agreement - to a Sydney-based company run by a well-known soccer identity.



**They're the boys
from the bush and
they're back in town**
Gippsland Falcons special
pages 5 and 6.

Mennillo delighted with move to Wolves

By Aidan Ormond

Dino Mennillo's transfer to Wolves will be music to the ears of the Union movement in this country. Mennillo lavished praise on the PFA for assisting him in terminating his contract in Auckland, after he hadn't been paid, thus allowing him the opportunity to play for the high-flying Wollongong.

"Well it all started a couple of months ago," he explained. "I am a member of the PFA - this has been the first year I've joined and I can't believe I haven't joined before. In terms of supporting the players and the clubs they have been fantastic; Brendan Schwab and Shannon have done a great job."

"Anyway I hadn't been paid by the Kingz and so I didn't know what to do. I understood the club was having problems so that's when the PFA stepped in to try and help the club and myself. There was no guarantee that the club was going to be around and everything lead me to be a free agent," said the University graduate (pictured right).

"I couldn't talk to anyone until I had officially terminated my contract."

"I looked at Wolves and felt they were my first choice because they are very attacking and I knew Nick from my time in the NSL."

"It was a good chance to get away from Auckland. Having said that the



media in New Zealand was very supportive of my decision."

"My time in New Zealand was great and Wynton Rufer is a wonderful coach. I still think the team can make the six. It was a shame towards the end of my stay because I was coming into good form. It was a very hard decision."

"I did feel bad about leaving the club until somebody told me what soccer was all about ... and take the opportunities when they arise. I have a personal life that I have to think about too."

"My partner has been very understanding of my moving from Adelaide then Auckland and now to Wollongong."

Continued page 24

S-news

Inside Soccer's Australian news and gossip

FANS LEAD THE WAY

There were great scenes at Breakers Stadium last Friday night as two of the league's best supporters were going through a singing duel throughout the whole match and afterwards in the car park. It was the Rowdies v the Spirit Point mob as both passionate set of supporters sang their hearts out for their teams. After the eventual duel-off in the car park it was handshakes all round and an invitation to the club for a couple of beers and a discussion of the game. If all supporters could behave in this manner football worldwide would be violence free. Congratulations to both set of supporters for your healthy attitude to the game and your club. Thanks Michael Kmet for letting us know.

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE

What's with that spot just off the NZ coast? First six Socceroos are turned back en-route to Chile, then the Kingz' plane's door wouldn't close travelling to South Melb (causing a two hour delay in kick-off). Thankfully someone had the bright idea of giving the visitors a genuine haka before the game. Result? Kingz beat South in a shock home loss.

BEARDSLEY DELAYED

Prospective English guest player Peter Beardsley has told the Knights his appointment as an England junior coach may delay his planned trip. The club still hope to have him here at some point. Meanwhile Graham Arnold will be back tonight and will not be going to the Hungary game with the Socceroos.

BROWN SENDS WARNING

Crack NSW Super League club Blacktown City have shown some awesome form of late. And coach Brian Brown has news: it's going to get worse for the other sides. Brown, one of the league's more knowledgeable blokes, said to S-news: "We haven't achieved our full potential yet. Stats say we have more shots on goal than any other side, which is pleasing. And we have a number of very good athletes here at the Gabba Stadium." He added that speed demon (no pun intended) Naoki Imaya was one to watch - the City coach even had praise for some SL referees! And while we are praising SL clubs, the Leichhardt Tigers' match day program is excellent, in fact, it is arguably better than most NSL offerings. Well-done Tigers.

DAMNED STATISTICS

At the Power v Force game there were 60 separate stoppages, 44 free-kicks, nine off-sides, six yellow cards and a red. Little wonder the Brett Hugo-officiated game never got a chance to get going. In complete contrast was the previous evening's Gerry Connelly-officiated Breakers v Spirit. All reports suggest it was a good hard physical game, and there was just one yellow. Needless to say, it was a great game to watch, which was pretty much the consensus from all concerned. Onya Gerry.

MARCONI GOES TO VIAREGGIO ... WITH EDDIE

No that's not Eddie Krnecvic, rather Eddie Bosnar. Yes that's right, Sydney United's Eddie Bosnar. The squad leaves this week and we wish them all the best. Bosnar, speaking with S-news, was keen to play down the significance. "Both clubs did the right thing by talking to each other and I will be gone for this trip only," said the affable Bosnar. He was keen to point out that he was not signing with Marconi. The Stallions are in Group 4 with Brazil's Campinas, and Italy's Napoli and Perugia. S-news confidently predicts that with Mikey Turnbull in goal and Eddie B in

defence, no striker will come within cooee of the mighty Stallions defence.

IDJ BOOKED FOR NOT HAVING TAPE ON SOCKS

Ivo de Jesus does not like wearing tape to keep his shin pads up. So he rolls his socks around them and gets the occasional admonishment from the odd referee, but generally he has no problems because tape causes him to cramp. IDJ was booked by referee Ed Lennie at Olympic recently when he was told to leave the field and put tape on his socks. IDJ then told the assistant referee he has never heard of this rule before, and was promptly booked by Lennie, who could not possibly have heard what was said. "Ridiculous" was IDJ's response. Does anyone know the ruling on havintape on your socks?

HISSY FIT OF THE YEAR

A ward surely goes to an unnamed official who felt she/he should get his/her face on TV instead of one of their players. The said official, who is usually quite rational and very pleasant, went absolutely nuts, threatening all sorts of things to the shocked TV people. This little show was done right in front of the club heavyweights. I guess the stress of life gets to all of us in the end?

CREWSY'S CREW

No this is not the name of a new sitcom featuring the zany exploits of an NSL keeper and his equally madcap Power teammates. It's a situation whereby the Power keeper Andrew Crews is the patron of a High Schools programme. There is also a programme for primary school kiddies called 'Mile's Mates', featuring Mile Sterjovski. Each programme has incentives such as free tickets and supporters packs for those involved. By the way, 'Crewsy' should be back in about a week.

OLYMPIC WYNTON

Wynton Rufer is rumoured to be one of those poor bastards who has to run with the Olympic Torch as it makes its way through NZ. However a Holy War has erupted over comments made by OFC Chairman Charlie 'Steptoe' Dempsey. He felt two years was long enough for the Kingz - who have SKY TV interested in an 80% sharehold - before they must go back their 'own' league. Wynton Rufer, voted Oceania's player of the 20th century said in the NZ media that there is no 'own' competition for the Kingz to return to. "Like Charlie Dempsey, I'm also on FIFA. I have spoken to Sepp Blatter's personal assistant who said he was disgusted with what Dempsey had been saying about the Kingz ... Blatter is keen to have soccer people [like me] in a leadership role. I'll be in Zurich next week and will be talking to FIFA about the Kingz and their future. People at FIFA agree [having the Kingz playing in the NSL] is the most positive thing for New Zealand soccer. They feel it can only strengthen Oceania football and add weight to the argument for direct World Cup entry." So there!

NUMBER NINE'S THE ONE

Nine is clearly the magic number to beat, says Greg Blake. Brisbane's stunning early season streak ended at nine games and Newcastle's more recent club-record undefeated run also ended at nine. Wollongong has twice gone eight matches undefeated this season and Carlton ran up seven games without loss earlier in the campaign. Current best - going into round 21 - are the Melbourne Knights, who were five games without loss before the trip to Perth last Sunday.

INSIDE SOCCER

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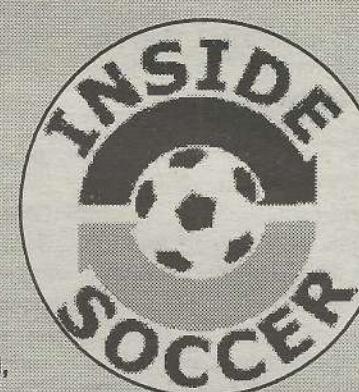
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More surprises planned, says Nogarotto

By Aidan Ormond

If Remo Nogarotto's plans work out, another high-profile world football star will be at Northern Spirit in the not-too-distant future.

Speaking after the Nicola Berti press conference last Friday, the Spirit



Nicola Berti: was training on his first full day in Sydney.

Chairman said he was working on a few things at the moment.

"Mate, he is one of the biggest names in world football. If we can pull this off it will be big," he said.

"Hopefully there will be one more surprise before the end of the season," Nogarotto added enticingly.

As for Nicola Berti's first meeting with the local media, there is no doubt that while here the Italian star will feel at home in glare of the spotlight.

And he has a reasonable grasp of English which will help, although as he said, "football is the language we all can understand."

He is a natural performer who will be of enormous value both on and off the park. He refuted claims about his motivation saying he was looking forward to the challenge, despite last having played a competitive game 2-3 months ago.

Berti is signed for the balance of this season. There is a possibility he may play beyond that, however the Italian midfielder has a standing arrangement with Charlton Athletic that if they are promoted to the Premier League (he was at Valley Parade recently for a two-week trial), he will play for the English side next season.

Nogarotto, himself an Inter fan, described the signing as "bold and

brazen" which pretty much tallies with Spirit's ethos of taking Australian Soccer to a new level.

"And he's a good-looking lump of a lad who should give the girls at North Sydney extra motivation to turn up!" he noted.

Berti is here with his fiance.

The deal that brought Spirit's new acquisition to Sydney involved a number of sponsors. Inside Soccer believes that the amount of money involved, while no doubt significant, was not as hefty as many may have thought. The deal gives the Italian the sort of lifestyle he is accustomed to.

And of course Sydney, the Olympic City, would have been another attraction that would have sold the former Inter and Spurs player.

Ian Crook, the current Spirit coach while Graham Arnold is overseas with the Socceroos, said he will have a chat to his new Italian star about what sort of role he will have. "Players at Nicola's level can fit in quite easily," he said.

Crook's team Norwich City played Berti's Inter in Europe in 1983, losing 1-0 in both games.

Ironically, Berti's first look at Sydney was an early morning walk through nearby Chinatown - in this year of the Dragon, Spirit will be hoping he breathes fire into their spluttering campaign.

Berti began training straight after his first press conference. After Spirit's 4-1



Spirit Chairman Remo Nogarotto: has another ace up his sleeve?

loss in Newcastle, the sooner he can play, the better.

Can't wait.

NICOLA BERTI ...

Has played 39 times for Italy, scoring three goals. He has also played in two World Cups, including the 1994 World Cup final against Brazil. His clubs include Parma, Fiorentina, Inter Milan, Spurs and Alaves. Berti has also played 39 matches in Euro competitions, scoring eight goals.

Crooky



handled by the PFA (Professional Footballers Association.)

The minor disputes a couple of players are having with the club have nothing to do with Nicola. The poor guy is being used as a pawn.

What makes me laugh is that the PFA tells everyone that they will not register any players with any club while there is money owed to any player at that club.

Last Friday night we handed a debut to a 17-year-old kid, Michael Prentice.

Michael was registered as a player with Northern Spirit on Thursday afternoon. Why wasn't his path into the NSL blocked by the PFA?

Nicola Berti's arrival into the NSL should have been met with the excitement that was exhibited at the press conference last Friday, but it has been clouded by the demands of the PFA.

The bottom line is that he has been registered and I can't wait to see him run around North Sydney Oval on Friday night wearing a Spirit shirt. I reckon I speak for the entire Australian Soccer fraternity when I say that

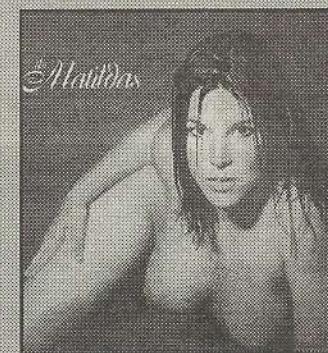
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Question: Which African nation is due to play the Matildas in March?

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GREG BLAKE
C7 SOCCER COMMENTATOR

grblake@primus.com.au



If you lived through the winter of 1999 in NSW or Victoria it was difficult to ignore the largely contrived hysteria surrounding the admittedly significant achievement of Tony Lockett, as the Sydney Swans spearhead headed towards his record-breaking 1,300th Aussie rules goal.

The AFL's publicity machine moved into overdrive to trumpet Lockett's feat in beating a long-standing competition record and becoming the greatest goalscorer in that competition's long history.

Adelaide Force champ, Damian Mori, moved to within three of the NSL all-time record a couple of weeks back, his 134 career strikes passing the old mark of 133, set by John Kosmina, and to within a game or two of edging past the current record of 137, set by Brisbane's Rod Brown in 1996/97.

The NSL's publicity machine is not so grand nor influential as the AFL's, but I am sincerely hoping that the mere single line referring to Mori's historic chase in a recent SA press release isn't as good as it gets.

As for recently reclusive Adelaide City Force, if they weren't still actually turning up for matches we'd be a bit worried that the club was still on the face of the earth at all, such is the lack of publicity from within since former CEO, Ned Coton, took a one-way ticket back to basketball.

If both league and club let Mori's big occasion pass without so much as a squeak it will prove once and for all that this league really only does get as much as it deserves.

Annie, you really can't have it both ways. The Northern Spirit boss apparently implored the media to do the job of

dissecting the performance of referee Simon Micallef after his team's 2-2 draw at home to South Melbourne recently, which is fair enough on the basis of a season of some thoroughly perplexing officiating performances.

But a coach asking the media to do a credible job of reporting footy fairly reeks of double-standards.

I can't think of a coach in this country who doesn't rate our soccer media's general knowledge of the game as any more comprehensive than that of your average garden geranium.

Most players and coaches either dismiss most of what is written as ill-informed, or refuse to acknowledge that they even waste the time of day monitoring what is said.

Ask John Kosmina how much credibility the media has with him?

Which is fair enough.

But point being, if we can be duly appointed to rip the refs then there is no moral high ground to retreat to next time the journos find a target in anyone else, including Graham Arnold.

On the issue of refs, I did not detect a hint of any ultimate and satisfactory resolution to the great divide between the clubs and Gary Power's NSL officiating team in the wake of the meeting between Power and the coaches last week.

Certainly our 'Inside Soccer' front page quotes from Wollongong boss, Nick Theodorakopoulos, last week were not especially encouraging (your tribunal appearance is booked, Nick).

But I was encouraged by the remarks of one of our finest NSL officials, who obviously cannot be named for fear of being dragged out of his bed in the dead of night and whisked off for some 're-education', given the current ban on refer-

ee-media relationships.

He told me that he felt the refereeing standards weren't as bad as the media have been suggesting, but conceded that communication lines were down.

"From a personal point of view I don't think I've done too badly this season," he told me.

"But I would be more than happy to take the time to talk to coaches individually about any of the decisions I make."

"Sometimes it's just a matter of explaining exactly what has happened and why."

"I think most of the referees would be happy to do the same and I certainly think it would help resolve some of the problems we have at the moment."

A rare moment of good sense in what has become one of this season's ugliest issues.

Why not let the refs clarify their decision-making to the blokes who feel the heat, the coaches?

Maybe as a trade-off for no more public criticism.

Over to you, Gary Power.

One question regarding the proposed new second division posed by several people over recent weeks is; if we apparently don't have enough referees of an acceptable standard to stock our senior NSL games, how are we going to find enough to officiate throughout both divisions each weekend?

Good point.

Ah, hello, anybody home at Marconi Stadium?

Maybe I'm so spoiled by the glorious excesses of the rabid masses at places like Perth, Northern Spirit and Newcastle that your more traditional supporters at places like Marconi seem a little tame in comparison.

But I've been lucky enough to catch at least one Stallions game each season at the club's historic stadium for about two decades and if the home fans' recent effort against Perth is anything to go by, the Brad Maloney's would get a better reception at the mausoleum these days.

What's gone wrong?

I mean, this stadium used to rock.

Against Perth they fair dinkum got out-barracked by six (that's six, folks) visiting Perth Glory supporters.

I've never heard Stallion fans so muted, and that despite one of the best comebacks of the season, as the Brad Maloney's came from a goal down, owned the second half and deserved to romp home.

Damn, who dropped that pin?

Guess the player entering milestone territory? Uncloistered by the bounds of orthodoxy; a rare and precious jewel of the game and by the length of the straight at Randwick the best Aussie player to never play his trade overseas.

Three championships - two as skipper - two as consensus best player awards etc., etc., rah, rah, rah...

No prizes for getting Paul Trimboli in one.

And South Melbourne owes him big time, thus we can fully expect some pomp and ceremony the likes we have rarely seen before at Bob Jane Stadium when the club hosts Marconi on February 27.

When South Melbourne visits Gippsland this weekend Trimboli equals the club's NSL record of 338 games, currently held by former teammate Steve Blair.

Barring injury or suspension 'Trimmers' will play game 339 for the club in round 23, thus ensuring his place as surely the greatest player ever to don the famous blue strip.

And just to ice it, Trimboli happens to be easily one of the nicest blokes in the industry.

Congratulations hardly seem sufficient.

I suppose Melbourne's 'Age' set the tone when they edged out an award-winning soccer scribe in Patrick Mangan, but surely the crap dished up as humour in a recent edition of the 'Sunday Age' is enough to tell soccer heads that enough is, in fact, enough.

Counted at least four pot-shots at soccer on and around the feature back page of a recent edition; none worth recounting here except to say that the same comedians who found super-imposing the head of tennis champ, Martina Hingis, on the body of a sumo wrestler the height of good humour in the 'Pssst' section also made a point of mentioning that "Pssst wouldn't walk across the road to watch a soccer match."

No doubt too busy with much loftier journalistic aims; perhaps establishing a national loudest fart competition.

Let's just say, don't bother buying the paper.

The news of the resignation of Carlton's general manager, Lou Sticca, comes as some relief.

To be honest, the incredibly passionate way in which Sticca approached his job and his devotion to the cause always worried me and I fully expected the eventual press release announcing his departure from Carlton would read more like 'Carlton today announced that long-time general manager, Lou Sticca, was today relieved of duties after suffering a stress-induced heart attack.'

You gotta hand it to him ... Sticca was on fast-forward just about 24 hours per day for the club he was so instrumental in getting off the ground.

He deserves plenty of credit for helping create the club from nothing more than mere dreams.

I'd be pretty certain that there is more to this story than meets the eye, but suffice to say that his sudden resignation late last week took us all by surprise.

Changes at Carlton and Kingz looking decidedly shaky; wonder how the make-up of the new 12-team NSL is looking right now?

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Robbie Puca Looking for Glory in Gippsland

By Aidan Ormond

Robbie Puca, Gippsland Falcons' 20-year-old midfielder, has his heart in West Australia but his soul in Gippsland. His heart belongs to girlfriend Frances, but his soul is in Gippsland, and the tenacious midfielder is firmly committed to Falcons' attempts to make the six.

"Yeah, my phone bills back home to my girlfriend in Perth are pretty astronomical!" he said laughing.

"But I love it here in Gippsland. The people are so friendly and the team spirit is amazing ... we are all in this together," said the Fremantle-born midfielder yesterday.

Last season Puca was invited to trial for a few days at Gippsland by coach Stuart Munro; the then WA Premier League player was signed up immediately.

He does however go back to Perth during the off-season to complete an apprentice course.

"Usually we train in the morning, then

have lunch. Kick back with a movie in the afternoon then training at night. If we don't train in the morning, we may be doing promotions and clinics for the club.

"Wednesday is normally our day off. I love sports so I may go for a hit of golf, or, I clean my VR Commodore Berlin, which is all done up and looks great!

"I enjoy the life here. It's slower paced and more people know you more. There are a lot of die-hard fans. What we need to do is be successful to bring out the entire community. Falcons have the potential to pull huge crowds," he observed.

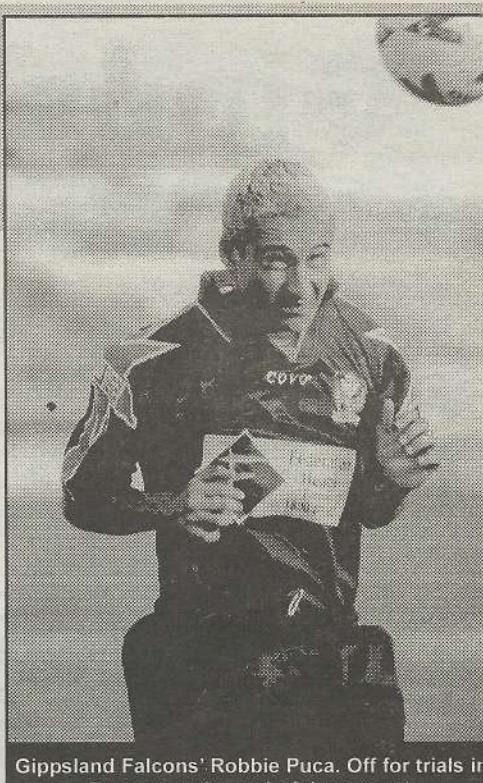
Falcons stalwart Manny Gotis is held in very high regard by Puca and the rest of the club. "Manny," said Puca, "is a 30-year-old kid! He is so funny, he makes you laugh all the time. We call him 'Mr Gippsland Soccer'.

"He is always on TV and in the papers promoting himself and the club. He's our boss. He is the best bloke, he can always cheer you up."

As for Welsh international Jeff Hopkins, Puca is in awe of his coach. "He is the strongest player I have ever seen. He trains the way he plays. My injuries at training last year all came from him!"

Hopkins was once described by English striker Ian Wright as one of the toughest he has ever played against.

"We have a lot of younger players here in Gippsland. We are all getting a go here and we just love it. We all stick together. When I was younger I always



Gippsland Falcons' Robbie Puca. Off for trials in Pescara at the end of the season.

wanted to travel around Australia, and now I do.

"Every week we show we can dominate sides, but we need to put away our chances. And if we can fix the scoring problem and stick together for a few more years, who knows. We say, look at Newcastle and how they have developed as a club."

Puca may not be part of that development over the next few years: trials in Italy have been slated for the NSL off-season.

He will however, always have a special place in his heart for Gippsland ... and Frances of course!

*More Gippsland Falcons news and stories next page.

Troy Cassar Daly live this Saturday at Falcons

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Gippsland Falcons v
South Melbourne from 4pm**

Gippsland: the heart and soul of country soccer

By Lucio Viggiano

With all the talk in the media of a relaunched National Soccer League, little time or effort has been dedicated to assessing the benefits of regional teams competing in Australia's premier soccer league.

The involvement of regional teams such as Wollongong, Newcastle and Gippsland is paramount in ensuring that the world's most popular sport achieves exposure beyond the capital cities of Australia.

Regional team participation also provides a gateway for the wealth of soccer talent in those regions to participate at the highest level in this country.

Gippsland Falcons is one club the many in the media have been quick to target for exclusion from the league, yet few of the so-called experts have ever ven-



tured to Gippsland or could tell you where it is for that matter.

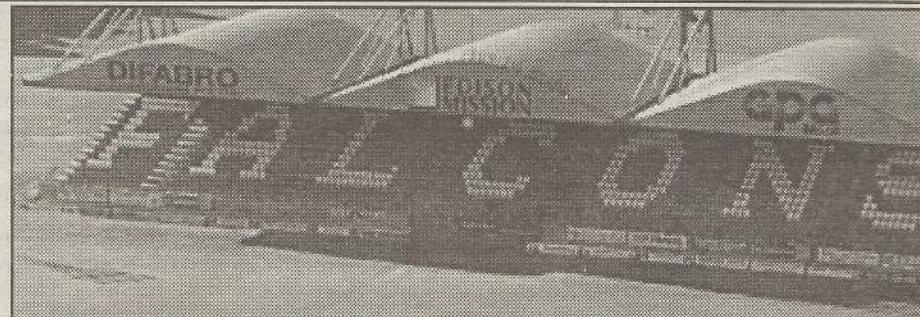
So where is Gippsland? The Gippsland region of Victoria is situated east of Melbourne and covers the coastal and mountain ranges through to the NSW border.

Its most notable landmarks being the coastal regions of Wilsons Promontory National Park through to the Lakes district encompassing the popular holiday destination of Lakes Entrance.

Nestled within the Gippsland region, 150 km east of Melbourne is the Latrobe Valley. The source of Victoria's power supply, the Latrobe Valley covers a 50-km radius with a population approximating 100,000.

Situated at the heart of the Latrobe Valley is Morwell, the home of Victoria's only regional National Soccer League club, the Gippsland Falcons.

Since their inclusion in the National Soccer League back in 1992/93,



Gippsland's excellent facilities that also hold concerts and special events, such as the Troy Cassar Daly concert after the Falcons game this Saturday night.

Gippsland Falcons - to ensure competitiveness - have predominantly recruited players from the metropolitan district.

Only 16 out of a total of 92 players that have taken the field for the Falcons since its inclusion in the National Soccer League have come from the Gippsland region.

Of these 16 players, six are currently in the 20-man squad assembled by Jeff Hopkins. A significant statistic that further supports the argument for regional representation in the NSL.

When those with influence at Soccer

Australia finally sit down to assess which clubs remain in the NSL next season, all I ask is that they venture beyond Sydney and Melbourne to the regional areas of our great nation.

There they will appreciate that it is not the politics and numbers game that matters, but the exposure of the world game that counts.

Ask yourself not what a regional club can do for Australian Soccer, but what can Soccer Australia do to promote the game we all love to all Australians!

The Boys from the Bush

By Lucio Viggiano

The 'Boys from the Bush' include the experienced defender Manny Gotis, the exciting midfielder-cum striker John Hutchinson, tenacious Adrian Savage, skilful Juan Nilo and promising youngsters Jonathan Buhargiar and Ben Cassar.

Another product of the Gippsland region that is playing in the NSL is the ex-Gippsland Falcons and Carlton defender, Marcus Stergiopoulos, currently with the Football Kingz in New Zealand.

Manny Gotis, at 30 years of age, is one of the seasoned campaigners and leaders in the Gippsland Falcons squad.

Having played for the club as a youngster in the Victorian Premier League, Manny returned to the club in 1996 under Frank Arok following a stint in the Victorian Premier League with Port Melbourne.

Making a late debut into the National League at 26 years of age, he spent many seasons dominating the local Latrobe Valley competition while also playing senior level Australian Rules football in the Gippsland Latrobe Football League with Moe.

He has since established himself as one of the most consistent defenders in the National League.

Jeff Hopkins said: "Manny is 100% behind the club in everything he does and is well-known and respected in the local community.

"He is a very influential player, not only with his ability but with his strength of character and personality".

John Hutchinson, 20, is an exciting prospect with huge potential. A product of local club Morwell Pegasus, John represented the Latrobe Valley at all junior levels before joining the Gippsland Falcons youth squad.

Making his debut during the Frank Arok era as a 17-year-old schoolboy, John recently reached his 50 game milestone with the club.

An elegant left-sided midfielder-cum striker, John has become an integral part of Jeff Hopkins' senior squad.

"John is having an outstanding season, he has taken a huge step up from last season and his consistency, hard work and considerable ability make him a contender for our best player of this season," noted his coach.

Juan Nilo, like Manny Gotis, has returned to the Falcons this season after spending several years in the Victorian Premier League establishing himself as one of the top strikers in the competition.

A naturally gifted player with abundant skill and speed, the diminutive striker of South American heritage has been a regular feature in the Falcons lineup this season.

At 25, he has a promising future with the Falcons: "Juan has done everything he could to make himself a success this season, he has probably been the most unlucky of all our players in front of goal."

"I still feel that once he scores his first there will be plenty of goals from him this season," said coach Hopkins.

Adrian Savage, a 20-year-old utility has come to the fore this season under the guidance of Hopkins.

Making his debut in the opening round last season against South Melbourne, Adrian has this season established himself as a regular fixture in the Falcons line-up.

Playing in the Latrobe Valley junior leagues with Moe City, he progressed to the Falcons youth squad and then spent a season with South Dandenong in the



Manny Gotis, Jonathan Buhargiar, John Hutchinson; (front) Ben Cassar, Adrian Savage, Juan Nilo.

Victorian Premier League before returning to establish himself in the senior squad at Falcons.

Used mainly in a stop-gap utility role to date, Savage's speed, strength and tenacious attitude all adds up to a promising future.

His adaptability has been his strength according to coach Jeff Hopkins: "Adrian has shown his versatility this sea-

son playing in five different positions and adapting to each one easily. He has been very unlucky not to play more games and has a big future at NSL level."

Jonathan Buhargiar is one of the younger members of the Gippsland Falcons squad at 18 years of age.

Continued on page seven

Marconi's Christian Care

By Daniela Raco

You are hoping to be part of Raul Blanco's Olympic squad for 2000. What does the chance to play for the Olyroos mean to you?

This season I've proven I can play regular first team football, and play consistently. I've chosen to remain in Australia, as opposed to playing overseas - this puts me on the backfoot, but things will hopefully change in the next few months. I try to play the way I would if Raul Blanco was there every game.

Do you feel disadvantaged when local-based players don't have the professional set-up some of the overseas Aussies have?

I think so. Here we train once a day, if that. Overseas-based players have the upper-hand in this regard.

So, do you have aspiration to break into the European scene?

Yes, at the end of the season I hope to trial in Italy.

What are the qualities of a good coach?

Understanding what a player goes through, and being able to put a squad together.

So in one word, describe your coach Eddie Krncevic.

The man?: Class

The coach?: winner

And what's so special about Brad Maloney?

Brad's a team player. He gives us all encouragement and looks to help each player.

Who or what inspires you?

Maradona ... at his best.

What are some of Chris Care's



off-field pastimes?

Sleeping, and hangin' out with the boys.

Do you have a favourite Sydney nitespot?

'Home' nightclub at Cockle Bay and Club Marconi on a Sunday night.

Favourite food?

Pasta at 'DeNiro's Cafe' in Fairfield Heights.

If you were Prime Minister for a day, what would you do?

Everything would be free!

What is the best excuse someone has used for missing training?

Francis Awaritefe: "I had a job interview."

Buddy Farah: I was arrested and taken away in a paddy wagon."

Continued page 22

Continued from page six

Made his full senior debut against South Melbourne in the pre-season Tynan-Eyre Cup competition and has been with the club since he was four years of age.

He made his NSL debut coming off the bench against the Parramatta Power in Round 17 gaining praise from Jeff Hopkins.



The Falcons Development Officers with their sponsor's sign. Valsport can be called on 02 9527 1583.

"Jonathan is one of many talented young players that have come through the youth squad. He is hard working, dedicated and determined to push himself into first team contention".

Ben Cassar, 20, is an example of the exceptional young talent in the Gippsland region.

A skilful midfielder, Ben progressed through the VIS and Falcons youth squad to make his senior debut for the Falcons late last season under Stuart Munro, before being struck down with a serious knee injury.

Having recently resumed training and gaining match fitness with the youth squad, Jeff Hopkins believes it is only a matter of time before Ben features in the senior squad again at Gippsland.

"Ben has shown great character, determination and hard work to come back so quickly from a knee reconstruction last season."

"He is a very talented central mid-field player who can dictate play with his clever and accurate passing," concluded Hopkins.

Socceroo tour: Farina brings bite back to side

Australia went down 2-1 to host nation Chile in their opening game of the Four Nation Tournament in Valparaiso, Chile last Thursday.

The Aussies were a goal behind as early as the 5th minute but Steve Corica leveled the scores at 1-1 in the 15th minute of the game.

The LG Socceroos had defender Jason Van Blerk sent off twenty minutes from full time.

Frank Farina's men dominated the game but were unable to put the finishing touches to their creative work. Chile scored a late winning goal from a dubious penalty.

LG SOCCEROOS TEAM LINE-UP:

Mark Schwarzer, Shaun Murphy, Jason van Blerk, Luke Casserly, Hayden Foxe, Paul Okon (c), Josip Skoko, Craig Foster (Kasey Wehrman 65'), Danny Tiatto (Stephen Laybutt 75'), Steve Corica (Scott Chipperfield 83'), Paul Agostino (David Zdrilic 70')

Yellow Cards:

Paul Okon 30', Craig Foster 60', Paul Agostino 70', Mark Schwarzer 89'

Red Card:

Jason van Blerk 68'

Injuries:

Danny Tiatto (swollen achilles)

In their second game Australia fought out a nil-all draw with Slovakia in Valparaiso, Chile.

The LG Socceroos dominated the match which was played in blustery conditions, but were unable to put the finishing touch on several scoring opportunities.

Coach Frank Farina was happy with the team's performance, coming on the heels of the tough game against Chile just three days ago.

"I was very pleased with the way we played out there today, and I suppose the only thing that I'm disappointed with is that we didn't get the win, because I really felt we deserved it to be honest."

"Overall we dominated the game, the Slovaks virtually sat behind the ball for the entire match and their game plan seemed to be to try and catch us on the



Steve Corica: scorer of Australia's goal against Chile.

break, which never eventuated.

"Towards the end of the game we had 2-3 really good chances, Pablo Cardozo had a great strike which the keeper parried for a corner and then another one 2 minutes later which just hit the keepers arm and was dead lucky."

"The conditions were particularly windy and that had its bearing on the game, but I'm really happy with the way the boys backed up."

LG SOCCEROOS TEAM LINE-UP:

Mark Schwarzer, Shaun Murphy, Stephen Laybutt, Luke Casserly, Hayden Foxe, Paul Okon (c), Josip Skoko, Kasey Wehrman (Brad Maloney 71'), Scott Chipperfield (Pablo Cardozo 80'), Steve Corica, David Zdrilic

Yellow Cards:

Shaun Murphy 5', Steve Corica 14'

Tonight (Tuesday) the Socceroos will be going for their first win under 'Frankie' when they play Bulgaria. Of course there is no TV coverage so we, like everyone else, will have to rely on second hand reports.

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AUSSIES on the world stage

A round-up of how our Aussies players fared abroad this last week ...

SKOKO SIGNS FOR BIG BELGIUM BUCKS

The Josip Skoko saga has ended after he signed a contract for Belgian title-holders RC Genk. Skoko has joined the many other Aussies abroad making a very lucrative living from their soccer skills with his reported earnings at A\$1.5m on top of a A\$1m signing on fee.

Skoko is currently in Chile with the Socceroos where he played the first two games against Chile and Slovakia but is set to miss the last game against Bulgaria and fly out to Belgium to embark on his new career.

Also in Belgium, after a long time out with injury, Joe Spiteri finally returned to the playing field last week when he played the full 90 mins for his Belgium club Lierse. He hadn't played since round two but was rewarded early in the game when he scored in the derby against KV Mechelen in the 7th minute.

In the English Premier League, Mark Bosnich continued in goals for Manchester United but it wasn't good news for the English champions as they succumbed 3-0 away to Newcastle. United went behind to a superb Duncan

Ferguson goal and then had Roy Keane sent off before Alan Shearer finished the job off with two late goals.

Meanwhile Bosnich has vowed never to reveal his penalty-saving secret - even when he retires.

The Manchester United goalkeeper's latest spot-kick heroics came against Middlesbrough at Old Trafford recently when he dived to his right to save Juninho's effort.

Bosnich earned a reputation for saving penalties during his days at Aston Villa and he refuses to say how he manages to guess right most times.

"That's my secret," he said. "I've got my own little ways of deciding which way I'm going to go, but that's my secret and you won't even find out what it is when I hang my gloves up because I will be far away on a beach in sunny Australia."

Harry Kewell's Leeds team had a turnaround in fortune as they rallied from successive defeats to inflict a 1-0 home defeat on Tottenham. Kewell, playing in a striking role alongside fellow youngster Alan Smith, was the hero with a 23rd minute individual goal. He was replaced in

the 68th minute by Darren Huckerby.

In the Nationwide Division One games, Stan Lazaridis made his return as a starter for Birmingham as they beat Bolton 2-1 at home. Lazaridis had a good game before he was replaced in the 81st minute - Birmingham now lie in sixth spot and well positioned to participate in the play-offs for promotion to the Premier League.

Neither of the Aussie 'keepers that could have been on the field in the Blackburn-Swindon game participated with John Filan out with a shoulder injury whilst Swindon's Frank Talia, who had been the regular 'keeper for the bottom placed team, was on the bench again after having been displaced a few weeks ago.

Kevin Muscat was in the Wolverhampton Wanderers team as they lost 2-0 away to leaders Charlton. Muscat played the full game while his fellow Wanderer Steve Corica was away with the national team in Chile. Wolverhampton lie in seventh spot, just one point behind Birmingham, and they too are poised for a spot in the play-offs.

Another two Aussies were missing as Crystal Palace hosted the resurgent Sheffield United. Palace's captain Craig Foster was missing along with United's Shaun Murphy with both players part of Frank Farina's squad in Chile. Olyroo Nick Rizzo made a 67th minute appearance as a substitute for Crystal Palace in the 1-1 draw.

The in-form Danny Tiatto, also exhibiting his style in Chile, was missing from the Manchester City line-up as they beat Norwich 3-1 but fellow Aussie Danny Allsopp was a 61st minute substitute as City continued to hold on to the important automatic Premier League promotion second spot behind Charlton.

Aussie Mike Panopoulos was part of the starting line-up for Portsmouth as they lost 0-1 at home to Fulham. He was replaced in the 77th minute whilst 'keeper Andy Pettersson wasn't part of the Portsmouth squad.

George Kulscar was missing from the Queens Park Rangers squad that drew 1-1 at home to Stockport as was Andrew McDermott from the West Bromwich Albion squad that had a 1-0 win over Crewe Alexander. Jason Van Blerk, away in Chile, was also absent from the West Brom team but Jason Kearton was back in goals for Crewe Alexander.

In the Nationwide Division Two games Reading had a 2-0 home win over a high flying



Josip Skoko: the former Geelong player has signed a lucrative deal with Belgium champs Genk.

Millwall team with all three Aussies on the field. Andrew Bernal came on in the 33rd minute and received a caution later in the match for Reading while both Aussies, Lucas Neill and Tim Cahill, played full games for Millwall. Reading is dragging itself away from the relegation zone while Millwall is still within striking distance of the top two in fifth spot although they have played more games than their higher placed competitors.

In the Scottish Premier League Mark Viduka ignored the negative publicity (see story left) with a goal for Celtic in a 0-3 away win over Dundee, while both Tony Vidmar and Craig Moore had a rest with Rangers having the weekend off.

In the German Bundesliga Ned Zelic returned to the starting line-up for 1860 Munchen mid week as they lost 3-0 away to SSV Ulm for whom David Zdrilic was absent in Chile and similarly Paul Agostino for Munchen.

Zelic played as a deep lying midfielder but reverted to his favoured sweeper role as Munchen had a 3-1 home win over SC Freiburg on the weekend. Zelic celebrated his return to sweeper with the opening goal for Munchen in the 17th minute.

Josip Simunic wasn't included in Hertha Berlin's team for either of its two games - a midweek 2-0 home win over Arminia Bielefeld or the 4-1 away loss to Werder Bremen on the weekend.

Zeljko Kalac was again the goalkeeper for Roda JC as they beat fellow Dutch team FC Utrecht 3-2 but neither Jason Culina nor Joe Didulica were part of the Ajax squad on the weekend.

In the Spanish Second Division Kosta Salapasidis wasn't included in the Compostela team as it went down 3-1 away to Leganes.

In the Croatian First Division, Ante Milicic has been a regular scorer for his team Rijeka during their winter break friendly games - the league season resumes next weekend.

* The Japanese J-League is in between seasons at the moment with Aussie Tony Popovic undergoing pre-season training with his Sanfrecce Hiroshima team under the coaching of former Socceroo manager Eddie Thompson.

Like so many other Japanese teams Hiroshima will soon be in Australia as part of their pre-season routine. Popovic and his team-mates are scheduled to spend ten days in Adelaide arriving in the city of churches on the 21st of February.



be one of the first clubs to show interest.

Sixth-placed Tottenham Hotspur manager George Graham has watched Viduka play this season but has baulked at the prohibitive transfer fee of STG10 million (\$A25.06 million) the club has suggested.

Graham is reportedly keen to pursue Athletico Madrid's Dutch striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, whom he used to coach at Leeds, but his pay demands would be far in excess of Viduka's.

Interest in Viduka has also been expressed from Spain.

In last week's action in the Scottish league things were back to relative normality with Celtic, under the leadership of former Glasgow great, Kenny Dalglish, winning 0-3 away to Dundee.

Viduka was oblivious to all the drama and continued with his goalscorer record with a goal in the 69th minute. Viduka received the ball wide and cut inside with pace before drilling a fierce 20-yard shot beyond the reach of the Dundee goalkeeper.

Mark Viduka's tenure with Scottish giants Celtic has again been brought into question with the Aussie's involvement in a half time fracas with the team's assistant coach during the embarrassing 1-3 home loss to minnows Inverness Caledonian Thistle in a third round Scottish cup game.

Viduka (pictured) is reported to have lunged at Eric Black after John Barnes' assistant questioned his commitment. After being restrained by other players he threw his jersey at Barnes and remained in the dressing room for the second half.

Celtic's loss and Viduka's action brought to a head the future of Barnes and his coaching staff.

The end result was that both Barnes and Black, along with another assistant, former Liverpool legend, Terry McDermott, were sacked by the club and Viduka survived, for the time being.

Although Viduka disputes the half time events as reported in the media he has not endeared himself to the Celtic faithful and he may be on borrowed time at Parkhead.

The drama came just at a time that life in Glasgow for the talented Viduka had appeared settled after the stormy start at the beginning of the season.

Viduka is racing away with the goalscorer honours in Scotland and is averaging close to a goal a game for the Scottish giants even though the team has not been performing up to expectations. After a promising start they have slipped ten points adrift of arch rivals Rangers who seem set to continue their recent domination.

Viduka's form has attracted the attention of many European clubs and even his recent erratic behaviour won't stop them from lining up at the door should Celtic be prepared to release him. Celtic won't do to too badly out of such a deal as they would stand to make a big profit from the sale of Viduka, whom Barnes stated was priceless a few weeks ago.

English giants Tottenham Hotspur would

NSL TOP SCORERS:

PABLO CARDOZO

(Sydney Olympic) 13

MICHAEL CURCIJA (SM) 12

CON BOUTSIANIS (PG) 11

PAUL FOSTER (BS) 11

ALEX MOREIRA (C) 11

CROWD COMPARISON:

Cumulative to Round 21

99/00: 860,268

98/99: 842,920

Fixture changes:

*Please note that the Marconi Stallions and Perth Glory game in Sydney will be played on Good Friday April 21 kick-off 6pm (in place of the original Easter Saturday)

*R23 South v Marconi on Feb 27 will start at 5pm

*R25 Carlton and Strikers is now on Sunday March 12 at 7pm

*R27 South v Strikers on March 26 starts at 5pm.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"It was a frenzied fun park ride." C7's Greg Blake on the Breakers v Spirit match last Friday

"Eccentric"

New Wolf Dino Mennillo on former teammate Marcus Stergiopoulos.

"He's a 30-year-old kid!" Robbie Puca on teammate at Falcons Manny Gotis.

"Half the crowd is my family."

Eddie Krnecovic on Carlton's home gate against Marconi. He wasn't joking.

"I would like to train today."

New Spirit signing Nicola Berti the day after he arrived. Good attitude Nic.

"He's a good looking lump of a lad."

Remo Nogarotto on Nicola Berti

"That's my secret and you won't even find out what it is when I hang my gloves up because I will be far away in sunny Australia."

Bozza on his penalty-saving secrets.

"I don't want to sit here and tell you a load of bulls---t and say we are still in it ... we're not."

Spirit's candid Ian Crook on their finals hopes

Countdown to Mori's Millennium!

For all those Mori's Millennium watchers, the record is still three short of being equalled.

This week Adelaide Force is at home to Perth Glory in what is the closest the Glory boys have to a local derby.

Last time Force scored six at home, somehow though the Glory defence does not have that air of fallibility about it.

Expect a goal or two from Mori though, to inch him closer to the record.

This is the round of derbies with Falcons home to South Melbourne. Gippy man Robbie Puca is in awe of the side from Bob Jane. "I don't think I've beaten them before. They are a level above everyone else, and they showed in the World Club Championships that Aussie Soccer is not that far behind the rest of the world."

Troy Cassar Daly is playing after the game at Mobil Park. See ad on page five for details.

Carlton and the Melbourne Knights do battle at Knights Stadium.

Given the recent conjecture re. a merger, there should be an added sting in this game's tail, not to mention the ex-Knights in Blue shirts.

On form, Knights look favourites despite the two sides' nine place difference in the league.

Breakers - surely the good news story of the season - have a decidedly tricky encounter in New Zealand. Not only are the unpredictable Kiwis buoyant after a massive upset at Bob Jane last week, but the game is being



ty, with Wolves and Olympic resuming pleasantries. One thing for sure, this has got goals written all over it, especially if Cardozo, Chipperfield and Horsley are back for their respective sides after Socceroo duties.

Without a doubt well worth the trip down the scenic south coast on what hopefully will be a rain free day.

In Sydney Marconi and Sydney United clash - United will be without Eddie Bosnar, ironically playing for the Marconi youth side at the prestigious Viareggio tournament.

Spirit and Brisbane will be the talk of the town for one reason only: Nicola Berti.

Spirit coach Ian Crook has already given up any hope of a finals campaign, although lurking in the deep recesses of the optimistic minds of the North Sydney faithful will be thoughts of a 'Berti-led revival.'

Cosmos is at home to Parra

Mori's goal tally:

134

The record:

137

played at Wellington's Westpac Trust Stadium.

So, there is more travelling from Auckland for the Breakers, plus, of more concern, is the state of the pitch, largely used for cricket.

Back in NSW and derbies aplen-

Power. If Power wins their faint hopes of a top six will still be within its grasp. Cosmos should have game-breaker Ivo de Jesus back after suspension, plus with Jason Polak in fine form, anything is possible.



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Breakers primed for historic finals showing

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS 4

Buonavoglia 35, 50, Angieski 80, Tancheski 87.

NORTHERN SPIRIT 1

Lyons 85.

Friday night at Breakers Stadium, Newcastle. Crowd 6,978.



MATCH STATS:



NEWCASTLE BREAKERS:

Catlin, Pryce, Roberts, McManus, Sprod (Angieski 70), Dodd (Smith 79), Wilson, Buonavoglia, Owens (Tancheski 67), Harper, Moore.



NORTHERN SPIRIT:

Perosh, Enes, Langdon (Lyons 62), Slater, Troy Cranney, Moss (Snyder 55), Cunico, Bilokapic, Sobczyk, Griffiths (Prentice 82), Sean Cranney.

Yellows:

Spirit: Wilson 89.

Best Players:

3. TRAVIS DODD (BREAKERS)
2. John Buonavoglia (Breakers)
1. Greg Owens (Breakers)

Referee: Gerry Connolly

By Michael Kmet

The Newcastle Breakers demolished a highly depleted Northern Spirit side 4-1 at Breakers Stadium last Friday night. The Spirit were without the services of David Seal, Matthew Bingley, Tony Perinich, Mark Rudan, Simon Catanzaro, and Abbas Saad through injury, while Luke Casserly and Graham Arnold are in Chile for Socceroo duty.

This weakening of player strength really showed, as Newcastle, also without Brad Wieczorek and Vasko Trpevski through suspension, was comfortable winners in front of another large home crowd.

Northern Spirit's playoff hopes are all but over as assistant coach Ian Crook conceded in the post match press conference. "That's it for us. You can say it's negative, but at the end of the day we are ten points behind and there are sides that have games in hand on us. I don't want to sit here and tell you a load of bulls**t and say we're still in it - we're not."

While Spirit's year looks over the Breakers are set to make their first ever playoff appearance as they make their bold dash to ever-higher positions on the table.

This has been a remarkable run for a team that has very few big names and a player budget far less than most of the title contenders.

Newcastle is growing in stature every match and are now adding a strong attacking element to their traditional stout defence.

This attacking element was evident last Friday night as Newcastle opened up and created numerous opportunities - far more than the 4-1 scoreline suggests.

Ironically this openness allowed the Spirit with opportunities as well, however they lacked the firepower up front to capitalise - particularly through the penetration of Matthew Langdon on the left.

At the other end of

the park, the flat back line of Northern Spirit had enormous problems handling the pace of striker Johnny Buonavoglia and Travis Dodd on the right.

At times Northern Spirit looked downright slow.

The Breakers set the tone for the match early on as they carved opportunities for themselves.

Ten minutes in Andy Harper was given a gift chance when Dodd curled a perfect cross to him just outside the six-yard box.

Dodd stole the ball from Troy Cranney and combined well with Buonavoglia but somehow Harper headed over.

Ten minutes later Harper lobbed a ball over the Spirit defence to a marauding Buonavoglia who broke free.

The pocket dynamo tried to round keeper John Perosh, but Perosh read the situation brilliantly to steal the ball from Buonavoglia.

The Breakers' just rewards came in the 35th minute when midfielder Mark Wilson set Andy Harper free on the right. Harper had a heap of space and put through a low hard cross to the near post.

Buonavoglia timed his run perfectly to flick the ball past Perosh with his left foot.

Northern Spirit should have equalised just two minutes later when Glen Sprod cleared a Michael Cunico shot off the goal line.

This shot came after Robbie Slater beat defender Todd McManus and fired a wicked shot at Bob Catlin. Catlin did well to parry the ball but it fell to Cunico.

Newcastle nearly went into the break two nil up just on the stroke of half-time. Mark Wilson sent another excellent ball out to the eager Dodd on the right who cut the ball back to Owens yet he mis-kicked his shot straight to Harper.

Harper shot over.

The Breakers extended their lead five minutes after the break. A Mark Wilson shot deflected into the path of Buonavoglia in a crowded box. Buonavoglia coolly slotted the ball to the right of Perosh with his left foot.

At the 68th minute mark Bobby Catlin pulled off an amazing triple save.

A Spirit free kick found the head of Paul Bilokapic. Catlin tipped his header on to the crossbar and the ball fell to the feet of Michael Cunico. Cunico's shot was parried by Catlin, which fell to the feet of Shane Lyons.

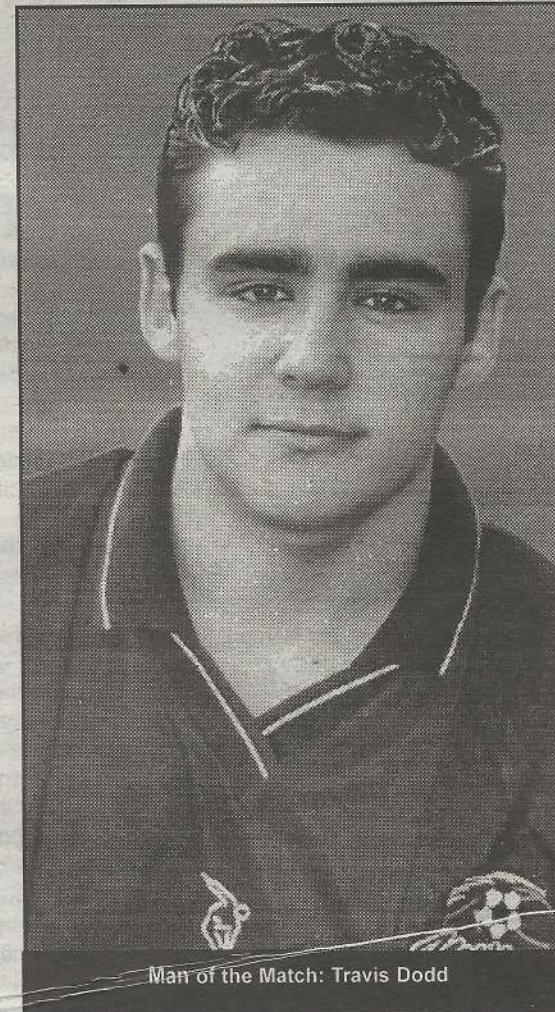
Remarkably Catlin leapt to his feet and saved Lyon's shot from close range.

Newcastle pulled even further ahead ten minutes before time.

This was a goal worked by the two substitutes Robbie Angieski and Damien Smith. Smith put Angieski free through a perfectly weighted ball. The skilful Angieski had the ball just outside the eighteen-yard box on the left. He showed great vision to chip Perosh and score his first NSL goal.

Northern Spirit salvaged a consolation goal five minutes later through a fierce volley from Shane Lyons. His left foot volley came from a Slater header and beat Catlin at the near post.

Other substitute Chris Tancheski also scored his first NSL goal three minutes before regular time when he stole the ball from Bilokapic and showed great composure for an eighteen-year-old to



Man of the Match: Travis Dodd

slot the ball past Perosh.

Buonavoglia had two excellent opportunities for a hat-trick in injury time but could not convert when one shot went wide and the other was fired straight to Perosh.

It was, however, Buonavoglia's first NSL double.

When asked on his chance of a hat trick Buonavoglia was none the less pleased.

"Fortunately the last couple of weeks the chances have been falling my way. I'm glad to have taken a couple tonight. Maybe I should have had my first hat-trick but I'm happy to have my first double."

Buonavoglia has now hit three in his last two games after a lean goal spell in the last few weeks. He attributes his regained touch to hard work.

"I think every striker goes through a bad spell where chances don't fall your way and the touches don't go your way. I'm happy that it's back."

Buonavoglia also noted that opposition teams are now marking him more heavily and that he must work harder to keep on top of defences.

On the other side of the Hawkesbury Ian Crook wonders whether Nicola Berti can change the Spirit's form around.

"He'll (Berti) will be a major plus for us. I have no doubts about that. At the end of the day one player does not make a team."

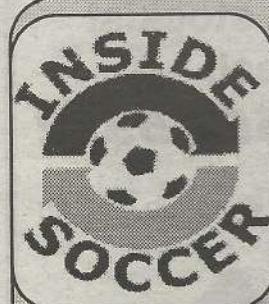
No disrespect to Newcastle, but they have eleven players here that aren't exactly superstars but they work hard as a team and get the results. Nicola Berti can come here as the best player in the world but he won't win games on his own."

A special mention must go to the refereeing efforts of Gerry Connolly who showed perhaps one of the best performances by an official in Newcastle for a long time.

Connolly let the game flow well and did not throw yellow cards about. In fact there was only one booking late in the game.



John Buonavoglia: Breakers' Sydney-based striker had a field day against Northern Spirit.



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Force Byrned by Power and ref

PARRAMATTA POWER 1

Bynes 38.

ADELAIDE CITY FORCE 0

Saturday night at Parramatta Stadium, Sydney. Crowd 2,262.



MATCH STATS



PARRAMATTA POWER

POWER: M Gibson, R Plesa (C), D Barrett, M Byrnes, M Santalab, S Berry (J Gibson 65), P Bennett (D Townsend 79), S Eagleton 72, J Burns, M Sterjovski, J Griffiths (J Angelucci 79).



ADELAIDE CITY

KNEZEVIC: V Knezevic, A Tobin, A Hornjik (D K Kim 85), C Veart, M Kemp, C Pelosi, A Constanzo, A Vidmar, B Hassell (L Brain 78), N Sabljak, D Mori.

Yellows:

Power: David Barrett 17, Joel Griffiths 24.

Force: Atila Hornjik 21, Carl Veart 40,52, Damian Mori 68, Dong Ki Kim 90.

Red Card: Carl Veart 52

Best Players:

3. **VILSON KNEZEVIC (FORCE)**
2. **Mark Byrnes (Power)**
1. **Mile Sterjovski (Power)**

Referee: Brett Hugo



Vilson Knezevic: a number of point blank saves kept his team in the game.

By Paul Goodwin

A superb 'Nicola Berti style' looping header by Adelaide City Force's talented Claudio Pelosi was the talking point of Parramatta Stadium after Parramatta Power's sien-

der 1-0 win over the South Australian side.

Unfortunately for the visitors it was a disallowed goal and the chance of an away point for City went with it.

Power overcame a sluggish start in each half to notch the 1-0 win, courtesy of a wonderful goal by defender and Joeys skipper Mark Byrnes, but were denied any addition to their tally by a magnificent display from 'Force' keeper Vilson Knezevic who batted away a succession of goal-bound shots, especially late in the second half.

Adelaide had more than the disallowed goal to contend with, however, as midfield dynamo Carl Veart picked up his second caution of the game very early in the second half, but to their credit the visitors continued to play adventurous and attractive football, almost snatching a point.

Byrnes' goal came in the 38th minute and began well inside the Parramatta half of the field.

Byrnes exchanged passes with Mile Sterjovski as he ventured into the Adelaide midfield and then did the same routine with Joel Griffiths, before sending a low shot from the left hand edge of the area into the bottom right corner of a net which had been guarded so well, to that point, by a solid defence and excellent safe keeping by Knezevic.

Adelaide began very brightly and had the Parramatta defence fully occupied as Sabljak, Hassell, Mori and Veart all made strong contributions for the 'Zebras'.

Veart volleyed wide from Sabljak's low cross in the 3rd minute, Veart drove just wide in the 4th after a corner was cleared to him on the edge of the area and Veart picked up a stray pass from Jason Burns, fed Mori on the right and saw the recent Socceroo find only the side netting from a tight angle.

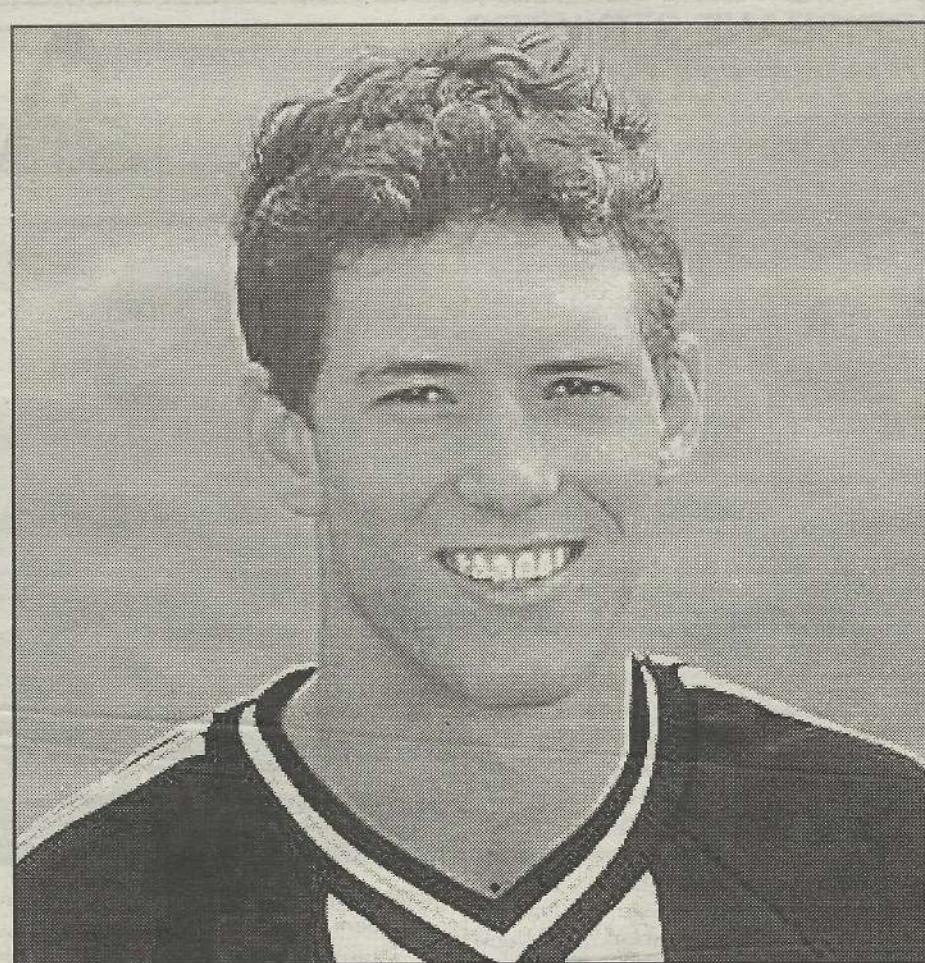
Parramatta's first opening came in the 16th when a Michael Santalab free kick whistled past the right hand post from wide on the left.

Brave keeping by Knezevic in the 26th saw a shot from point-blank range by Sterjovski beaten away, such was the impact that the keeper needed some treatment for several minutes. He recovered enough to punch away the resulting corner and continued to perform brilliantly.

The punch-out reached Steve Eagleton in a deep position, but so far had the keeper come to make his decisive contact that he was well off his line when the Power player tried to lob him, yet the keeper still raced back to grab the ball under the crossbar.

In the 34th Parramatta skipper Richard Plesa drove a speculative effort wide of the upright, after picking up a clearance and making good progress forward.

Sterjovski's firm drive a moment later was well dealt with by the busy Knezevic,



Mark Byrnes: the Joey captain pleased his coach and scored the winning goal for Power.

who really covered himself in glory on this occasion.

Then came the goal to sink the visitors and from then on Parramatta could not break past a stubborn defence well-led as ever by Alex Tobin.

The second half was quieter, though Sterjovski almost reached an awkwardly bouncing through-ball from Steve Berry, before the keeper, but hesitated long enough for Knezevic to claim it.

Mike Gibson had much less to do in the Parramatta goal, but he needed to be alert to block a shot from Pelosi who was becoming much more lively in the second period.

Pelosi's 53rd minute drive was well taken by Power's stand-in keeper.

Six minutes later, not long after Veart had received his marching orders, came another good chance for the Force.

Pelosi nodded the ball on and Sabljak steered the ball just inches wide. It did look as if the defence might be punished for relaxing after leading at half time.

In the 72nd a cross from the right by Sabljak eluded the defenders at the near post and reached Pelosi at the far side. He did well to direct a lovely looping header past Gibson into the top right corner, but as the header came in, it seemed that Aurelio Vidmar may have drifted into an offside position and the goal was not allowed to stand.

It seemed a harsh decision as the header went sailing straight into the net and Pelosi was clearly on-side when the ball was crossed in. Vidmar did not appear to be the target of the header.

Another point blank save by Knezevic in the last couple of minutes showed how close Adelaide came to plundering a point and after remonstrating with officials at the end of the game it was no surprise when Adelaide City coach, Zoran

Matic, did not want to talk about the game to the media.

Power coach David Mitchell agreed that the disallowed goal looked good to him and unless his goalkeeper had something to say about it he would feel very sympathetic to Matic.

Mitchell was more concerned about his own team's lethargy and was grateful to escape with all three points from a game which should have been produced a much more convincing win.

He was pleased with 17-year-old Mark Byrnes, but was not too happy with many of the others.

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Scoreless draw still entertains the Suncorp faithful

BRISBANE STRIKERS 0 CANBERRA COSMOS 0

Saturday night at Suncorp Metway Stadium, Brisbane. Crowd: 3,123.



MATCH STATS:



BRISBANE STRIKERS
 20. Duke 2. Gwynne 6.
 Ditton 11. Hews 13.
 McLaren 14. North 15.
 Battistin 16. Grierson
 17. Harris (8. Pilic 67') 18. Meredith
 19. Baldwin (5. Bell 81').
 Sub not Used: 10. Srhoj



CANBERRA COSMOS
 20. Barlow 3. Popovich
 6. Polak (2. Milin 90') 7.
 Winnie 11. Arranz 12.
 Hamilton 14. James 15.
 Kolpak (8. Watkins 73') 16. Prenzroski
 (23. Clark 78') 17. Hooker 24. Roberts.

Yellows:

Strikers: Nick Meredith 44',
 Matt Bell 90'.

Cosmos: Jason Polak 17', Toplica
 Popovich 23', Brian Hamilton 68',
 Harry James 78'.

Best Players:

1. JASON POLAK (CANBERRA)
 2. Nick Meredith (Brisbane)
 3. Jade North (Brisbane)

Referee: Con Diomis



Jason Polak: creative game in Canberra's midfield.

attack failed to trouble the scoreboard attendant.

Strikers youngster Jade North, rumoured to be a target for several European clubs after his starring role in Australia's U/17 World Cup campaign last year in New Zealand, had the first shot of the game in the sixth minute.

Cosmos keeper Grant Barlow had no problem dealing with North's shot.

Nick Meredith had a chance shortly afterwards when he pounced on a poor Canberra clearance of a Brad Ditton cross, but his long-range effort sailed over the bar.

North had another good chance after 16 minutes when he got on the end of a great flowing movement.

Jeremy Harris sent in a low cross, Peter Grierson dummied a shot and in the end North forced a good save from the Canberra keeper.

Just two minutes later Brisbane again should have opened their scoring account of the night.

Glenn Gwynne won the ball with a great tackle near the half-way line and his ball found Harris in space. Harris crossed to Meredith, whose 20 metre shot just dribbled past the upright.

North was inspirational in the first half and had yet another chance in the 21st minute. He latched on to Grierson's clever back-heal and made his way into the Canberra penalty area, leaving Cosmos defenders in his wake.

His angled shot ricocheted off a defender for a corner.

Canberra's first shot of the game came just before the half-hour mark and it was former Strikers favourite Jason Polak doing the honours.

Polak, who was a near-unanimous pick for man of the match, got on the end of a movement instigated by Glen Kolpak, another former Brisbane player.

Brisbane keeper Daniel Duke, standing in for Clint Bolton who is in Chile with the Socceroos, was not troubled as the shot sailed well over the bar.

Jeremy Harris rolled his ankle in a 50-50 challenge for the ball, but inexplicably coach John Kosmina left him on the field, which allowed Canberra to find a new attacking option through Harris' wing.

Duke had a scare five minutes later

after he went down trying to punch the ball clear. Canberra's Brian Hamilton headed down for Kolpak to take a rushed shot, but Strikers defender Mark Battistin cleared the ball off the line.

Polak could well have scored a memorable goal in the 37th minute, but his effort from 30 metres out just sailed over the bar.

Canberra would have been ecstatic going into the break at 0-0, and they asserted more control over the game in the second half.

The Cosmos, again through Polak, had a terrific chance to take the lead in the first minute of the half.

Polak's cross found David Winnie free to line up a header, but his shot flew across the face of goal.

Both teams seemed to trade off chances in an end-to-end tussle, which had the 3,123 spectators on the edge of their seats.

Canberra's David Arranz cleared the ball off his own line in the 49th minute after a goalmouth scramble, which would not have looked out of place in a pinball parlour.

Just a minute later, Harry James had a great chance for the Cosmos, but his shot powered into the side netting.

Meredith was one of the best on the park, and he had a great winding run into the Cosmos penalty area to set up Grierson's shot, which blasted off a Cosmos defender.

Cosmos substitute Andrew Clark required stitches after a head-clash with Strikers captain Stuart McLaren, and three minutes later Harry James was booked for a nasty challenge on Meredith.

The game's pace lowered until the last ten minutes, when both teams went up a gear in an attempt to snatch the three points on offer.

Brisbane substitute David Pilic dispossessed Arranz just outside the Cosmos box and fired in a shot, which Barlow did well to palm over the bar.

Brisbane's best chance of the night came in the 89th minute when Pilic sent in a low searching cross for Battistin, who was playing up front in a positional switch.

Battistin's legs were not long enough to get on the end of the cross, and his marker Robert Hooker cleared the ball out of the danger zone.

Battistin then turned provider in stoppage time when he sent in a good cross for Pilic, whose header went over the bar.

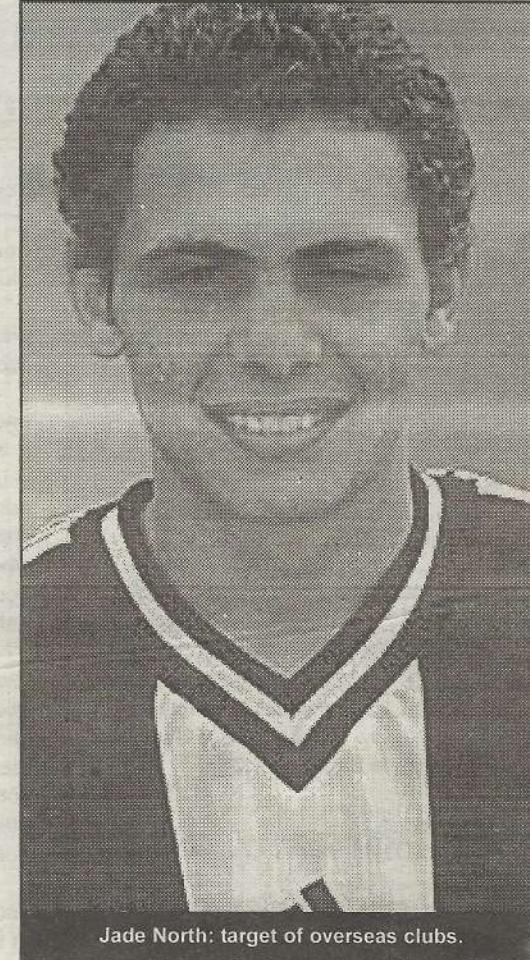
But it was Canberra who missed a golden opportunity for maximum points deep into stoppages.

Duke did well to block David Milin's powerful shot, but the ball fell neatly to Roberts who missed an absolute sitter at the death.

Canberra coach Tom Sermanni was happy with the result.

"I'll gladly take a point up here any time," he said.

"Brisbane certainly had the best of the first 30-35 minutes when they dominated the game and presented us with quite a



Jade North: target of overseas clubs.

lot of pressure.

"We rode our luck a little bit and held on, and in the second half the game could have gone either way."

Kosmina said his side should have got more out of the game, but was happy with the point.

"I think we did enough in the first half to win the game. [The Cosmos] are a good side and we let them back in the match," he said.

The Strikers were clearly missing the influence of Paul Foster up front, and Kosmina said he was still three or four weeks away from playing again.

Sermanni said that despite both sides missing key players, it was an entertaining match for the spectators.

"I think any neutral observers would have thought it was a good game," he said.

"It was not a boring, drab low scoring match by any means. Both teams had chances and both teams tried to score goals."



Strikers' best ... Nick Meredith

By Cameron Atfield

Canberra Cosmos walked away from Suncorp Metway Stadium with a point on Saturday night, after holding off a determined first-half onslaught by the Brisbane Strikers to earn a nil-all draw.

Both teams looked keen to make amends for heavy defeats last week (Brisbane losing 6-2 to Adelaide, and Canberra 7-3 to Sydney Olympic), but it was Brisbane applying all the early pressure in an entertaining encounter.

The Queenslanders failed to capitalise on a series of raids on the Cosmos goal, and really missed their strike force of Paul Foster (broken foot) and Peter Dwyer (suspension).

Brisbane's intentions were made clear in the first 10 minutes as the Strikers came out firing. However, their sustained

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Falcons' form a good sign for future

SYDNEY UNITED 0

GIPPSLAND FALCONS 1

MacNicol 16.

Sunday night at Sydney United Sports Centre. Crowd: 2,491.



MATCH STATS:

SYDNEY UNITED:
Tolios, Jurilj, Savoca
(Deak 68), Maric (Y),
Genc, J Moric, Arrarte,
A Moric (Rastall 52),
Pondeljak, Jermen
(Bosevski 45), Usljebrka.

GIPPSLAND FALCONS: Jevdjevic, Gotis,
Durakovic, MacNicol
(Kakos 72), Vargas (Nilo
85), Bell (Red Card 52),
Puca, Hutchinson,
Savage, Marcina,
Mandic (Robertson 65).

Yellows:
United: Maric 52.

Reds:
Falcons: Bell 52.

Best Players:
3. VARGAS (FALCONS)
2. Jevdjevic (Falcons)
1. Durakovic (Falcons)

Referee: Jeremy Blaney

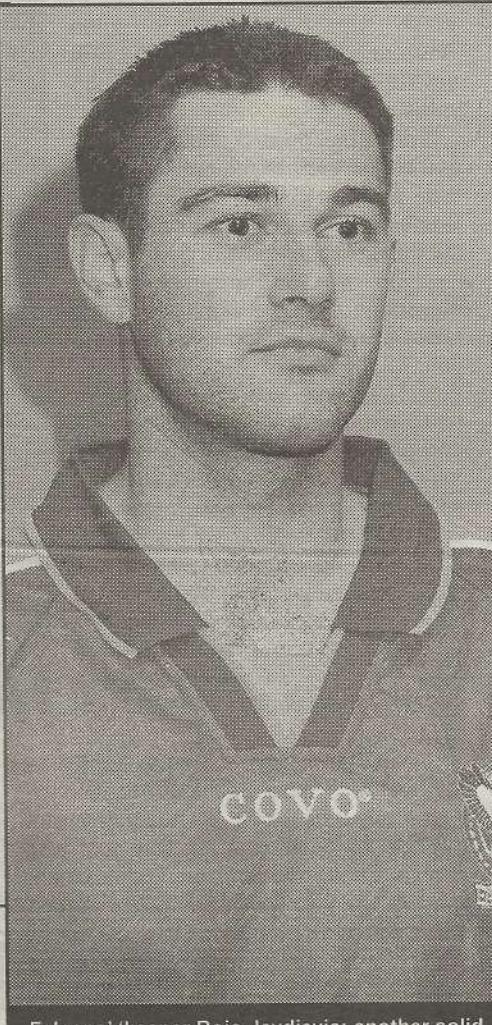
Steve Oldridge

This was a game which offered little incentive for either side - United is well entrenched in bottom place while the Falcons are only an outside chance of making an historic finals appearance.

But it was the home team, Sydney United, which applied the pressure for the first ten minutes - unfortunately they applied it to themselves - the United players appeared to be lacking direction on more than one occasion.

United's goalkeeper, Steve Tolios was the recipient of many back pass that were directed his way and found himself having to drive long clearances to alleviate the situation.

Brian MacNicol was the first Falcon to try his luck. Doug Marcina had crossed a perfect ball putting Tolios under pressure



Falcons' keeper Bojo Jevdjevic: another solid performance from the big man.

forcing him to parry the ball out for a corner.

In the ensuing goal mouth scramble the ball fell perfectly for MacNicol who lacked direction with his finish, easily clearing the crossbar.

Twelve minutes into the first half Gippsland were awarded a free-kick five yards outside United's box.

Whilst it amounted to little, the execution was a fan's delight and a defenders nightmare.

United were completely fooled by the three piece passing manoeuvre, the United defenders shed a sigh of relief as

the final pass missed its mark.

Two minutes later the United defence failed in an attempt to play Gippsland's MacNicol offside after Vargas had made a 35-yard run through the centre of the field.

The midfielder passed the ball to the free MacNicol who finished well to give Gippsland a 1-0 lead.

Aytek Genc was again a major contributor for the Sydney side (see interview with Roger Sleeman on page 26) and appears more relaxed under new coach Petkovic, continuing to supply quality balls to the front men and using his vision.

After conceding only one goal from the constant barrage of attacks, United started to spread the ball wide and mount their own attacks from the sidelines.

It was soon Gippsland that were found wanting - at times allowing United's crosses to bounce dangerously in the goal area.

On 37 minutes Zvonko Usljebrka passed a forward ball to Jermen but this time Mehmed Durakovic, Gippsland's classy defender, tracked him perfectly to nullify any danger.

Two minutes prior to the half time break United's Ante Moric gave his younger brother Joe Moric the chance to equalise from four yards but, although the shot was good the Gippsland custodian, Bojo Jevdjevic stayed focused pushing the ball skyward before leaping to capture it safely.

The second half saw Doug Marcina come out firing by combining early with Clayton Bell to have the first of only two attempts on goal for Gippsland in the second half.

United had no less than ten attempts on goal in the second half after Bell was sent from the field by referee, Jeremy Blaney.

The Gippsland midfieler slid in on a United player with his studs clearly showing and Blaney showed no hesitation in the sending him off.

The episode should have finished then, however, Tom Maric wanted to remonstrate with the offender but it only resulted in a yellow card for the tall defender.

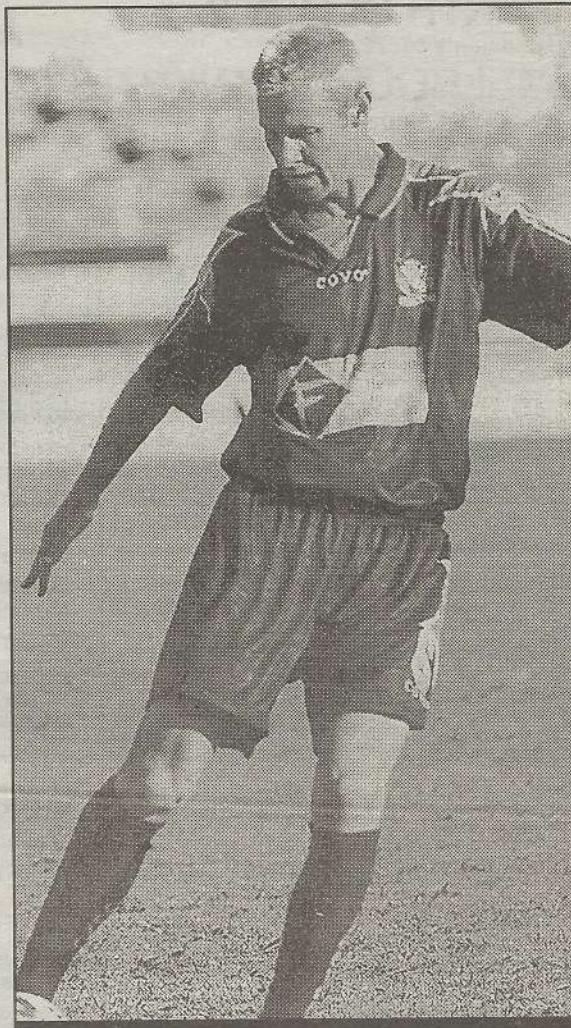
One sensed that United would step up the attack with Gippsland only having ten men, and they didn't disappoint, with Bosevski coming on at halftime.

His freshness and enthusiasm made him the perfect target for the midfield who utilised the option well.

Whilst the Gippsland defence in the main held off the attack, their keeper Jevdjevic played an integral role just three minutes from the end of the game.

Pondeljak struck a brilliant shot from all of 30 yards that had goal written all over it, but Jevdjevic pulled off a spectacular save to see the Falcons secure a 1-0 win.

After the game United's Tom Pondeljak was asked about the frustration of playing in a team at the bottom of the league.



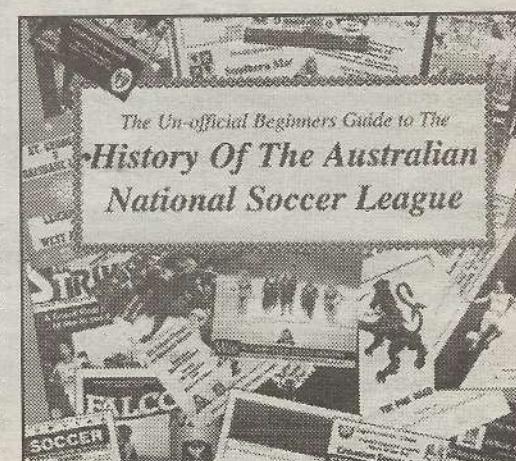
Brian MacNicol: continues to score goals with relative ease for Falcons.

"It is frustrating for the players and supporters, the team is better than the results we are achieving."

Asked what his future was, he replied, "I still have a year to run with United and am happy to play on."

United's captain Velimir Kupresak was a reluctant spectator at the game but said that he was a 90% chance of being back from his knee injury in two weeks.

No doubt a welcome return to a team who can achieve so much more, while Falcons will go into their big Victorian clash with South Melbourne full of confidence, particularly as later that day, South lost at home for the first time in about three years.



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Next week

Melissa Muscat is back with the inside story at Kingz, Cosmos and Strikers!
Plus: Paul Trimboli tribute

Gallant Knights fight for point in the cauldron of Perth

PERTH GLORY 2

Boutsianis 66, 72.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 2

Magdic 64, Rados 90.

Sunday night at Perth Oval, Perth. Crowd: 11,270



MATCH STATS:



PERTH GLORY:
Petkovic, Trajkovski,
Edgar, Naven, Valle
(Afkos 81), Miller, Ergic
(Carbone 85), Halpin,
Boutsianis, Buljan
(Aurelio 79), Edwards.



**MELBOURNE
KNIGHTS:** John,
Rajher (Pelikan 73),
Kovacevic, Magdic,
Kiratzoglou, Urlovic
(Rados 67), Banini,
Silic, Susa, Abbas,
Reda (Matkovic 77).

Yellows:

Glory: Boutsianis 63.
Knights: Urlovic 60, Reda 61, Silic 62

Best Players:

3. JOHN (KNIGHTS)
2. Boutsianis (Glory)
1. Halpin (Glory)

Referee: Eddie Lennie

By Dennis Gedling

Perth Glory snatched a draw from the jaws of victory at Perth Oval against a gallant Melbourne Knights. Perth Glory played some, at times, electric soccer but failed to put the result beyond doubt with many wasted opportunities and diabolical finishing.

Con Boutsianis scored the two goals for the home side, the second one being a cracking free kick from 35 yards out.

Paul Magdic and sub Rados were the scorers for the Knights, the second goal coming three minutes into injury time.

Glory was without star central defender Harnwell for the match as he was serving a suspension for picking up too many yellow cards. Kasey Wehrman was also missing.

Into the squad came new signing Aurelio from Brazil and star midfielder Con Boutsianis, making his first start in three weeks after suspension and illness.

Ivan Kelic was missing from the Melbourne side, pulling out at the last minute with an arm injury.

Under hot conditions the game got underway with the first play almost providing the Glory with an instant goal, but like many other plays today the finishing wasn't there. Ivan Ergic found Rob Trajkovski down the right hand side with his cross going quickly and dangerously into the box. Neither Boutsianis nor Alastair Edwards could connect with the ball with the keeper out of position.

Both sides preferred to pass the ball around in the first ten minutes of the match with Glory trying to make inroads into the Knights defence but this clearly was a more resolute Melbourne side than the one that was thrashed 6-1 in the previous Perth Oval encounter.

The Knights made their first serious threat on goal after 12 minutes when

Michael Reda shot well but wide. But the visitors didn't have to wait much longer for another golden chance when Mark Silic was given a great pass and chipped Jason Petkovic, but the ball went just over the crossbar.

Glory soon started to create the first of many squandered chances. Peter Buljan was given a tricky through ball which confused the Knights defence but before he could slot a shot past the despairing keeper a last ditch tackle by Murtala Abbas lodged the ball out of Buljan's possession.

The home side grew in confidence as the half went on and Ergic came close to scoring when he bicycle-kicked over the crossbar.

Boutsianis had a shot saved by an in form Knights keeper Martin John and the keeper was exposed again when a free kick by the same player went just wide.

Edwards then came close with two shots near the half hour mark of the match but the Knights defence made vital tackles or charge downs when it was needed most.

Boutsianis was dominating the midfield, finding opportunities to feed the striker or to have pings on goal himself but the home side's dominance was not reflected on the score sheet.

Shortly before half time Edgar showed some brilliant Brazilian skills dancing through the Knights defence before passing the ball off to Troy Halpin who shot just wide.

Glory went into the halftime break 0-0.

In the second half the home side were once again first to make an impression on the half with a teasing Trajkovski pass finding Scott Miller on the far post heading in superbly, but John once again making a fine save.

The Knights soon fought back with Silic missing an easy chance after a great through ball caught Edgar off his guard but Silic's shot went wide.

Bernd Stange's side attacked once more but let another, what seemed, simple chance go to waste through Halpin and Trajkovski.

On the hour the first booking of the match occurred when Paul Urlovic was finally booked for a rough tackle which was long overdue. Two minutes late Zeljko Susa and Silic were booked for a rough tackle and dissent respectively.

Glory seemed to have started cracking the Knights resolve but that theory was soon thrown out the window when the away side scored. The home defence was once again found out by a through ball when Silic found himself with a run on goal but preferred to pass to an unmarked Magdic in the box who slotted it past Petkovic, silencing the Glory crowd.

Somehow the Knights had cut the Glory defence apart working the ball up and were suddenly leading. It didn't take long for the home side to get back on level terms, another Halpin pass finding Trajkovski on the right side, his long pass into the box finding Miller at the far post again. Miller's shot was blocked but the ball went back to Halpin whose chip into the box found an unmarked Boutsianis who

headed the ball in from close range.

Boutsianis was also booked for over celebrating but what he did exactly to warrant a yellow card dumfounded most.

After 73 minutes the tiring Urlovic made way for Rados in the Knights side, which didn't seem to make much difference when Boutsianis put Perth in the lead with a cracking left foot free kick from 35 yards out.

The ball floated above the wall and hit the back of the net just out of the keepers reach. This time Boutsianis' celebration was more subdued than for his first goal.

This was the Perth marksmen's eleventh goal of the season and first super free kick at home for this season.

The home side now knew they had a chance to kill the Knights off and grab the three points but on 79 minutes Buljan missed an absolute sitter - a perfect pass found the Olyroo on the far post but his header did not connect properly. Nine times out of ten almost any player would have scored from such a position.

After this horror miss Buljan was subbed for new Brazilian Aurelio with the 25 year old coming on to a standing ovation.

Nine minutes from time, confusion reigned once more in the Glory defence with a mix up allowing the Knights to slot through an easy goal but the goal was controversially ruled offside. The assistant referee ruling to have seen Silic in an off-side position when the ball was played.

Four minutes from time John Carbone replaced a tiring Ergic with Halpin slotting into a more defensive role.

The Perth side continued to attack but its complacency in finishing the job brought their undoing. Trajkovski was given two ample chances to put the game beyond doubt but two one on one opportunities with the keeper were squandered from poor finishing.

Once again the home side's finishing was very poor and two minutes into time added on the Knights drew level.

Another through ball to a running right sided player who outpaced the Glory defence - a pass cut back found an unmarked player rather than a defender to clear the ball. The provider was newcomer Antony Pelikan and the scorer was Rados.

The celebrations of the Knights' players was in very poor taste and the behavior of Joey Rajher and a Melbourne official (gesturing to the crowd) was pathetic - the lack of professionalism of the people in question reflecting poorly on the club.

The final whistle went soon after the fourth goal of the match and a low groan seemed to go around the ground.

The Knights players were extremely happy being applauded off the ground by the pockets of their supporters plus some members of the Glory supporters.

After the match Glory coach Bernd Stange said that "we expected three points from matches like this. It is supposed to be hard for away teams to play here. The expectation is very high and we are expected to win but didn't. This was a wake up call and we have given away two points for the future."

Knights coach Vlado Vanis merely said when asked on his team's performance that "We come here



Blonds have more fun? Boutsianis scored two but Knights got a point.

ready to play to the best of our ability and we came away with a point, I'm proud of my young side."

Vanis should be proud of his side but almost every single person who witnessed the match would agree that Glory let the Knights off the hook.

The home team created numerous chances and had the Melbourne outfit struggling to close down the avenues to goal.

Players shouldn't be singled out but the final efforts and finishing of some were well below par and not good for a side that is alleged to be a title contender. Glory face a tough away trip to Adelaide Force whilst the Knights are at home to Carlton next week.

If Perth wish to challenge for a top two place this side of highly valued stars needs to finish the job and to make sure they play as a team.

MY BLUE HEAVEN

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LIFE AT OLYMPIC PARK PART II



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Marconi take more out of draw than struggling Blues

CARLTON 1

Marth 45+ pen

MARCONI STALLIONS 1

Trajanovski 56

Sunday night at Olympic Park, Melbourne. Crowd: 2,092.



MATCH STATS:



C A R L T O N :
Anastasiadis;
Anthopoulos,
McPherson,
Deans,
Atkinson (Terminello
45+), Slater, Marth,
Thompson, Moreira
Lapsansky,
(Conroy 79), Kennedy (Markovski 46)



M A R C O N I
STALLIONS: Turnbull;
Farah, M. Babic, Longo,
Gibson, Duric, Zoric
(McDonald 52), Di Gia
(Invincible 68), Care,
Trajanovski, Z. Babic

(Renaud 26)

Yellows:

Carlton: McPherson 55, Lapsansky 80
Marconi: Duric 20, Gibson 24, Care
80, Trajanovski 82

Best Players:

3. THOMPSON (CARLTON)
2. Care (Marconi)
1. Trajanovski (Marconi)

Referee: Mark Shield

By Kevin Christopher

Marconi stretched their unbeaten run to five matches after securing a 1-1 draw against fellow finals hopefuls Carlton on Sunday night, prompting coach Eddie Krnecovic to declare "We'll make the finals".

Although the Stallions remain outside the top six, seven of their next eleven matches are at Marconi Stadium, providing them with the perfect opportunity to stake a claim for a finals position as the season approaches the home straight.

For the Blues, the result extends their worrying run of home form in which they have collected just six points from their past five home games, and they urgently need a couple of wins to strengthen their brittle hold on a top six place.

This was a match that Carlton should have won, coming off a confidence boosting win at Gippsland last weekend, going in with an unchanged line-up for the first time since round eight, and having the better of the game with Marconi goalkeeper Michael Turnbull amongst his side's more frequent contributors.

Carlton thrashed the Stallions 4-0 at Marconi earlier this season, and history looked a chance to repeat itself as speedy forward Zeljko Babic was again forced to leave the ground in the opening twenty-five minutes with a hamstring strain. With no recognised forwards on the bench, Krnecovic was forced into a reshuffle, bringing on Brendan Renaud at left wing-back to patrol the elusive Archie Thompson, while Alex Duric was sent up front to partner Kris Trajanovski.

By that stage, Duric had already been booked for a foul on Thompson, and the speedy Carlton winger was a constant menace throughout the match providing a

number of dangerous crosses for his teammates.

The Blues had the ball in the net after twenty-seven minutes, when a back-heel from Moreira allowed Thompson the space to take a touch and fire at goal, but the ref disallowed his effort after Joshua Kennedy had handled the ball on its way to the goal.

The Blues suffered a further setback just before the interval when Mark Atkinson was forced to concede to a right ankle injury, but Stuart Munro avoided a reshuffle of his own by using David Terminello as a direct replacement in the unfamiliar role of right back.

Munro had persisted with a 4-4-2 formation following last week's success, but after playing most of the season with a 3-5-2, it may be a few more weeks before his charges come to grips with the slightly different roles required by the flank players.

Just as the first half seemed destined to finish goalless, Stuart Slater took on Chad Gibson on the left wing and made it inside the penalty box before Gibson mistimed a tackle and brought him crashing to the ground.

Referee Matthew Breeze had no hesitation in pointing to the spot and captain Andrew Marth stepped up to convert his 5th penalty for the season, sending Turnbull the wrong way.

The home side almost doubled the lead before the break when a Kennedy dummy left Moreira free to shoot with his left foot but his shot lacked power and Turnbull was able to save comfortably.

Having dominated the first half, it was surprising that Carlton allowed the visitors to dictate terms for the first twenty minutes of the second half.

Dean Anastasiadis was called into action to cut out a dangerous Gibson cross and Dave McPherson was clearly rattled when booked for a foul on Duric.

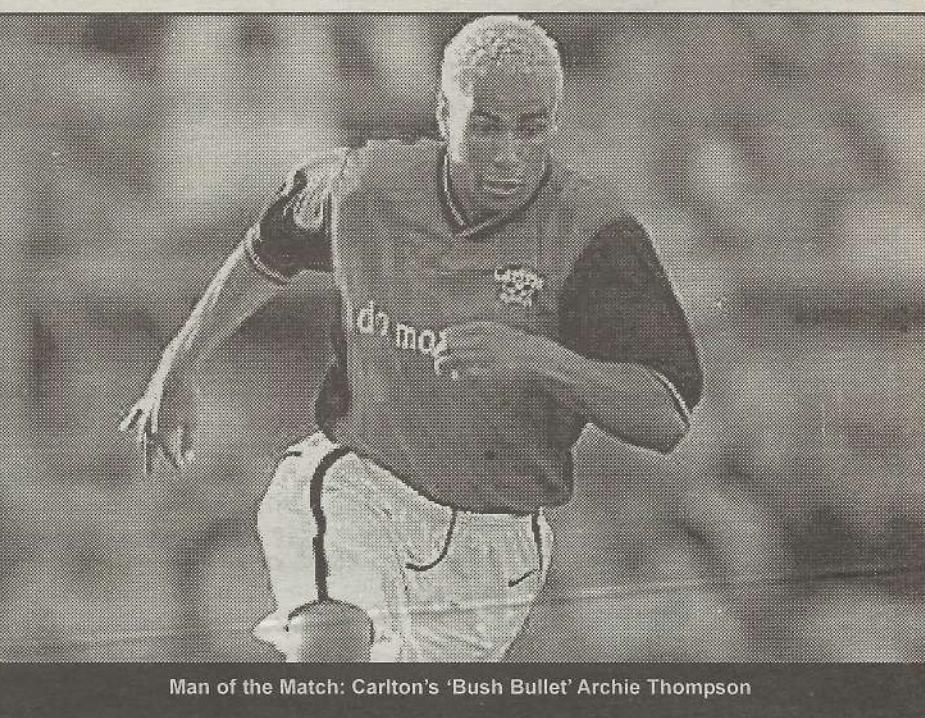
The rest of the team were rattled just a minute later when Christian Care set off on a penetrating dribble through the heart of the Blues defence, and although his shot was blocked by Anastasiadis, the rebound went straight to an unmarked Trajanovski who volleyed straight back into the net from twelve metres.

Carlton responded admirably enough, with Slater and Thompson causing consternation on the flanks for Marconi, but Carlton's productivity from set pieces is low and a major rethink could be in order.

The best efforts came from a curling Markovski shot which Turnbull did well to hold, while a Slater corner was headed narrowly wide by Markovski with less than five minutes to go.

Quite simply, the Blues are not playing with the passion expected of a side with championship ambitions, but while the Blues braintrust struggle to pin-point the precise reasons for their current inertia, Eddie Krnecovic was upbeat over his side's ability to extract a result with skipper Brad Maloney, away on international duty.

"It's a good result for us. We backed off a bit towards the end but at the end of the day it was a fair result. Everyone's



Man of the Match: Carlton's 'Bush Bullet' Archie Thompson

capable of beating everyone else at the moment, there isn't one team that stands out. It's going to be an interesting top six. I'm still confident, it's still early, we just need to string together a couple of consecutive results and jump up the table."

Queried on whether matches against his old club hold any extra significance, Krnecovic was quick to dispel any grudge theories.

"I've got a lot of friends here, it's nice to come back. It's really sentimental to come back, this was my introduction to coaching".

The affable Marconi coach couldn't resist a dig at Carlton's lack of support however, quipping, "half the crowd is my family!"

However the meagre attendance, Carlton's lowest of the season, was the furthest thing from Stuart Munro's mind after the match.

"I thought we did well in the first half, and obviously we got the goal at a good time, so the confidence levels are high, players look as if they're hungry, but the start of the second half - it was like a completely different team. They just seemed to take their foot off the pedal. It took 'em fifteen or twenty minutes to get back into it but by then we'd lost a goal and then we're up against it."

Munro was again unimpressed at the way his side surrendered a goal, a display which he described as "sloppy, real sloppy".

"We seem to concede a goal every week like that, it's something that just cannot be accepted."

It just means we have to score two to win the game. I felt Marconi were there to be beaten today but we never took it. You've got to go out and win games, not wait for the opposition to give them to you. That's the problem with my team at the moment. They get into a good position and then they seem to take their foot off the pedal. The inconsistency at the moment is the problem."

Having arrived unusually

late for the post-match conference, Munro was quick to dispel any thoughts of a dressing room dressing-down.

"I didn't give the players a rolicking. I'm trying to make them understand that they're throwing away the chances of being a top team in this league, just through not having the real personal desire to go out and get it."

The Blues' desire will need to be at full strength next week when they travel out to Somers St, a notorious graveyard for championship contenders.

With just two wins from their last eight outings, Carlton cannot rely on other results going their way for too much longer if they intend pursuing a top two finish.

SU44 - The Millennium Issue

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Heavyweight clash ends in draw



SYDNEY OLYMPIC 2

Emerton 27, Baillie 81

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 2

Mennillo 13, Ceccoli 48

Sunday night at Belmore Sports Ground, Sydney. Crowd 5,638

MATCH STATS:

SYDNEY OLYMPIC:
Olympic: Bouhoutsos,
Zoricich, Baillie, Juric,
Thomas (Jomaa 66),
Wilson, Phillips (Carle 61),
Emerton (Emerton 84),
Zorbas, Arambasic (Kalantzis 72),
Tome.



WOLLONGONG

WOLVES: Pogliacomi,
Stanton, Cervinski,
Blake, Souris Ceccoli,
Reid (Surjan 85), Huxley
(Spencer 76), Mennillo
(Lahanas 80), Young, Petrovski.

Yellow:
Olympic: Emerton 83.
Wolves: Lahanas 81.

Best Players:

3. EMERTON (OLYMPIC)
2. Ceccoli (Wolves)
1. Wilson (Olympic)

Referee: Simon Micallef.

By John Vrataric

The clash of the top two sides brought together the two highest scoring sides in the league with Dino Menillo, freed from his contract by the Kingz, capping his debut for the visitors with a stunning opening goal.

Neither team was at full strength with the national team depriving the teams of key personnel. The Wolves were without their inspirational skipper Matt Horsley and left sided attacker Scott Chipperfield while Olympic were without their top goalscorer Pablo Cardozo.

Olympic were coming off a super 7-3 win over a hapless Canberra Cosmos while Wolves needed to rebound after two successive losses including a disappointing 1-2 home loss to Newcastle Breakers

last week.

On a ground maimed early in the season the teams were greeted by a surface well suited to good football and both teams produced fast, flowing football in the first half.

In the second minute a lovely chip from Stuart Young wide on the left was well shielded by Saso Petrovski who was able to turn his marker to give himself room to shoot but his effort was ineffective rolling into the arms of 'keeper George Bouhoutsos.

In the sixth minute Wilson played a superb ball behind the defence but Norman Tome's attempted cross to Zlatko Arambasic was blocked by a defender for a corner.

Tome's corner from the right somehow worked its way to Ante Juric who was allowed a clear shot on goal but he couldn't quite connect in the right spot and it bounced off his shin safely into the hands of Wolves 'keeper, Leslie Pogliacomi.

Arambasic had an opportunity in the 10th minute when a clearance bounced off Menillo's shins into the path of the striker but his attempted shot on the turn was weak with Leslie Pogliacomi smothering the initial attempt. The ball was loose but Arambasic unable to take advantage of the situation and the ball was cleared for a corner.

But two minutes later new boy Menillo received the ball from a free-kick and with time and space he let fly a thunderbolt from just outside the penalty box that whizzed past the Olympic 'keeper for the opening goal.

In the 19th minute a nice one-two between Marcus Phillips and Tome through the middle gave the former a 25 metre shot which he struck with power but no accuracy.

Olyroo Brett Emerton produced a well executed reply in the 26th minute - the move started from a Lindsay Wilson throw in just in Wollongong's half. The throw in was glanced by the head of Arambasic in field where Tome was the first to react and he delivered a neat

through ball to Emerton who used his speed to waltz past his opponent and side-foot the ball past Pogliacomi.

Emerton was again the inspiration of a move in the 30th minute that almost brought the second goal for Olympic. After a mazy infield run Emerton provided a pass to Tome in the centre of the field. The little striker played the ball back across towards the right where young Peter Zorbas turned and shot first time but into the side netting.

In the 37th minute Phillips beat a couple of players and threaded the ball to Tome who created a small opening for himself but didn't take the opportunity to shoot when it presented itself.

Emerton was again in the thick of the action in the 41st minute when he again beat a couple of opponents and working his way towards the centre of the field delivered a good through ball to Zorbas.

The young midfielder took too long to shoot and Menillo was able to nullify the shot which looped away for a goal kick.

A minute into injury time of the first half Juric gave the ball away just inside his own half - Ceccoli accepted gratefully and took the ball all the way to the by-line but was unable to deliver the telling pass to the waiting Stuart Young.

After a first half in which Olympic had the greater territorial possession they came out in the second half with expectations to turn the possession into goals whilst the Wolves again relied on hitting their opponents with counter attacking football.

Young Ben Blake, making his debut, had a half chance in the 47th minute when Young set him free wide on the left but the defender totally miscued his shot.

Just one minute later the Wolves went ahead for the second time with a Ceccoli piledriver that was even more spectacular than Menillo's opener.

A headed clearance from Juric only travelled as far as Paul Reid whose weak shot ran loose from a deflection of an Olympic defender to the waiting Ceccoli who turned the whacked the ball past the 'keeper from just on the penalty box.

In the 49th minute a corner from Wollongong's right beat Bouhoutsos in the air with David Cervinski lurking on the far post. He jumped with an defender but could only 'shoulder' the ball into the side netting.

A quick counter attack in the 53rd minute saw Young facing three Olympic defenders so he attempted an audacious chip shot which was hit too wide.

In the 70th minute substitute



Brett Emerton: constant source of danger to the Wolves defence.

Nick Carle pushed a short ball to the advancing Juric who played a neat back-heal back to Carle but his first time left foot shot was wide of its mark.

Olympic took the initiative, spurned on by the promptings of Carle, and in the 73rd minute Wilson, Carle and Emerton all found themselves within the penalty box but unable and, seemingly, unwilling to shoot.

Another substitute, Chris Kalantzis, had a good chance in the 79th minute when a Hussein Jomaa cross was cleared out to him just inside the penalty box but his left foot shot, although it beat Pogliacomi, was deflected away for a corner by Ceccoli.

But Olympic did not have long to wait for their equaliser. From the resulting corner the ball bobbed about and with at least three Wolves defenders standing and watching, Scott Baillie had ample time to pick his spot and drive the ball past Pogliacomi for Olympic's second goal.

*Olympic continued to search for the winner, particularly down the left touch line, where Jomaa and Carle were prominent.

But it was a cross from the right by Wilson that saw Olympic's best chance to score the winning goal. The cross gave another substitute, Chris Kalantzis, a free header but his attempted downward header merely bounced softly into the chest of Pogliacomi.

In the 88th minute a cross from Jomaa was taken a mere centimetres off the head of Kalantzis on the near post and then in a Wolves counter attack Petrovski crossed to Young but his shot on the near post was deflected into the side netting.

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SOUTH MELBOURNE 1

Vlahos 31

FOOTBALL KINGZ 3

Van Steeden 3, Silva 13, Ngata 73

Sunday night at Bob Jane Stadium, Melbourne. Crowd 6,178.

MATCH STATS:



SOUTH MELBOURNE:

Jones, Alagich, Liparoti, Orlic, Lozanovski, Tsekinis (Magnacca 71), Panopoulos (c), Goutzoulis, Vlahos, Coveny, Anastasiadis. Subs not used: Cuzzupe, Culibrk.



FOOTBALL KINGZ:

Utting, Osman, Perry (Moya 77), Van Steeden, Middleby (Suri 44), Jones, Ngata (c), Vicelich, Stergiopoulos, de Jong, Silva (Rufer 71).

Yellows:

South: Panopoulos (36), Lozanovski (43), Anastasiadis (66).

Kingz: de Yong (80), Suri (86), Jones (87).

Best Players:

3. NGATA (KINGZ)
2. Vlahos (South)
1. Stergiopoulos (Kingz)

Referee: Mathew Breeze

By Alan Clark

A day that started off badly for Auckland Football Kingz when their flight out of New Zealand had to turn back because of a faulty door, ended in triumph when they hit the ground running in their meeting with South Melbourne at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday.

Kingz raced to a stunning two-goal lead before the quarter-hour, then held off a pressing South Melbourne to emerge 3-1 victors.

Kingz' third goal, coming at a time when the game could have gone either way, was highly controversial, and effectively put an end to South's chances of garnering even a single point from the match.

Kingz assistant coach Shane Rufer said his team's day had started at 3:00am Melbourne time, but their preparations were so adversely affected that the players were getting clothed and bandaged in the bus on the way into Bob Jane.

"We had our team-talk on the bus on our way to the game - players were getting strapped, and there were a couple of injections, all that kind of carry-on."

"It's not an optimal preparation," he said, clearly a master of understatement.

You wouldn't have known it such was their whirlwind start.

Kingz' first attack after just three minutes earned a corner which was whipped in by Lee Jones into a crowded six-yard box. Riki van Steeden rose highest to head it past South keeper Chris Jones with a forest of players unable to block it from crossing the line.

Kingz were being favoured by a strong wind which bent the ball on its way

in, and the tall South defenders failed to deal with it.

Ten minutes later, Kingz extended their lead. Marcus Stergiopoulos made ground up the left wing then sent in a far-post cross to an unmarked Jones who had time to head back across goal to where Aaron Silva - himself only marked if using the loosest of definitions - was able to head past the now stranded Jones.

This was not the start South were planning on.

"We made things hard for ourselves by conceding two goals so early," said South coach Ange Postecoglou after the game. "We put some pressure on them, we had some chances, but the third goal obviously killed that off."

But the two-goal lead was due reward for Kingz' approach to the game, and stung the South players into action. Goran Lozanovski and Andy Vlahos were South's prime-movers down the wings.

Lozanovski crossed for Robert Liparoti from the left only for Liparoti's header to go narrowly wide, but it was Andy Vlahos on the right who brought South back into the match after the half-hour.

Vlahos stole down the left, making ground and cutting in to reach the corner of the Kingz penalty-area before letting loose a left foot shot low past Kingz' keeper Mike Utting.

Seven minutes later, Lozanovski combined with Jim Tsekinis down the right with Tsekinis sending in a cross to Vaughan Coveny at the near post. Coveny's shot was going in but for a goal-line clearance from Van Steeden.

It was not a game for the faint of heart - both teams were committing serious resources to their attacking moves, creating an open and well-balanced match.

There were interesting one-on-one battles across the park - none more keenly fought than the duel between Lozanovski and Stergiopoulos directly in front of the grandstand for the first-half, and bringing all the elements of a Victorian-era melodrama to the more excitable of its inhabitants.

Stergiopoulos and Lozanovski took it in turns to be the aggressor and the aggrieved, but finally it was Lozanovski who wore the patience of referee Mathew Breeze overly thin, earning himself a caution just before the end of the half after felling Stergiopoulos who would otherwise have raced clear.

Veteran Kingz striker Fred de Jong and Liparoti were also waging a personal battle within the wider contest, but although there was less fire, there was no less endeavour.

John Anastasiadis thought he'd netted the equaliser midway through the second half, but he'd been flagged for an earlier offside in the move involving a through-ball played to Coveny. For his protests he was cautioned. A few minutes later he had a headed opportunity, but found it safely gathered by Utting.

But South's pressure was to no avail, and Kingz extended the lead with their controversial third after 73 minutes. Kingz captain Harry Ngata scored into the top corner from close in after a move that



Rick Van Steeden: Kingz scorer.

seemed to have a double offence. Firstly, as hard-working midfielder Ivan Vicelich played Ngata through, it seemed that Ngata was a metre offside and now facing only Jones. Jones came out to close him down, got a hand to the ball, but it fell again to Ngata whose arm appeared to touch it before he blasted home.

"I'm not going to talk about referees," said a manifestly disheartened Postecoglou after the game.

"It happened quite quickly, it's something to look at again," said Rufer. "But the ball's in the back of the net and the referee's given the goal."

The South players surrounded Breeze in a vain attempt to have the goal disallowed, and the less mature of the home support disgraced the club by throwing bottles onto the pitch. The resultant stoppage provided the significant component of the seven minutes added time beyond the regulation ninety.

But whether it was seven or another seventy, South seemed unable to claw their way back into the game, such was Kingz' approach to the match. Anastasiadis had an opportunity as he sped through well into added time, but his shot from the edge of the penalty-area sailed high over Utting's crossbar.

The Kingz' flight problems meant a game that was originally due to kick off at 6:00pm was postponed until 8:00pm, as their rescheduled landing wasn't due at distant Melbourne airport until 5:45pm.

Special customs arrangements meant that the Kingz party were whisked through the channel normally reserved for flight crew, but even then their bus didn't reach the ground until after 7:35pm.

As a consequence, the delayed kick-off was further delayed, with the game not finally getting underway until 8:15pm.

South Melbourne also had their troubles, fielding a line-up which taxed the fans' ability to recognise all the players in the fourteen.

Suspensions of Michael Curcija and Steve Iosofidis, the Socceroo absence of Con Blatsis who made a return to South America sooner than he might have guessed, and continued injury absence to captain Paul Trimboli, defender Fausto De Amicis, and midfield dynamo

David Clarkson, meant six first-team regulars were missing. Their absences gave opportunities to Ritchie Alagich as a starter, and Anthony Magnacca, Adrian Cuzzupe, and Rade Culibrk on the bench.

"It just seems like an excuse (to blame the loss on the absence of half his side), so I'm not going to make any. We weren't good enough, so we lost," said Postecoglou. "I thought we put a team out there good enough to win it. Auckland deserve the credit."

"I thought the Kingz showed good character," said Rufer. "Things had been quite disrupted - players' wages, and a new sponsor coming in buying eighty percent of the club."

"We can match teams physically, and now we've got a bit of self-belief that we can play away from home and win. That will all come from playing in this league and playing more games," he said.

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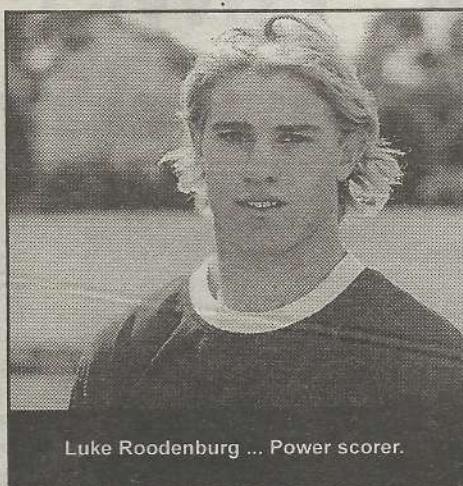
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INSIDE JUNIOR SOCCER



ACTAS THRASH QLD ACADEMY



Luke Roodenburg ... Power scorer.

Chris Conti reports that the rivalry between the Queensland and ACT Academies for supremacy took a new direction at the Suncorp Metway Stadium on Saturday night.

Confirming that their win over the AIS last week was no fluke, the ACT Academy took the game to the Queensland boys and finished the game well on top.

In the opening twenty minutes, the honours were shared with both teams committed to an attacking and attractive brand of football. In the 17th minute however, the Academy striker, Daniel Aliffi contested possession of the ball with Nathan Coe, the QAS keeper, and the ball fell to ACTAS midfielder, Matt Anstey, who volleyed the ball over the head off Queensland's Shane Stefanutto defending on the line.

Aliffi and fellow striker Paul Ivanic were making life very difficult for Andrew

Davidson and the other Queensland defenders and five minutes later Ivanic turned Davidson in the area and set up Ivanic whose shot was saved by the legs of Coe.

For the final fifteen minutes of the first half QAS pushed forward for the equaliser with Adam Webber very prominent on the right. On at least three separate occasions, Tony Giannasca in the ACTAS goal made outstanding saves, once again demonstrating that he is still one of the best keepers in the business. Giannasca denied Weber, Lawrence Drake and Russell Miner and on the occasion when he was beaten by a clever chip from Weber, ACTAS stopper Luke Morgan was on hand to clear off the line.

The second half was less than ten minutes old when QAS were reduced to ten men, which effectively reduced their capacity to get back into the game. Stefanutto incurred the wrath of referee Andrew Hebel twice in the space of three minutes and received a red card.

The ACT Academy then began to press their advantage and Ivanic set up Aliffi once again but Coe saved well. In the 65th minute a delightful reverse pass from ACTAS midfielder Adam Williams split the QAS defence and Ivanic gave Coe no chance from ten metres to make the score 2-0.

In the final fifteen minutes the Queensland Academy threw everything at the ACTAS in a desperate attempt to retrieve the game, but they once again found Giannasca in top form. Miner and Jonothan McKain were both denied by the agility of Giannasca.

ACTAS coach Ray Junna applied the killer blow to the QAS when he brought on Alvaro Guzman whose skill and speed twice punished Queensland in these last minutes with well taken goals, to make the final score 4-0 to the ACTAS.

QAS: Nathan Coe, Jonothan McKain, Shain Stefanutto, Andrew Davidson, Shane Smeltz (Jonathon Richter), Alex Devani (Mathew McKay), Russell Miner, Adam Weber, Sean Walsh, Lawrence Drake, Chris Messina (Wayne Heath). Subs not used: Daniel Varma, Daniel Dreger.

ACTAS: Tony Giannasca, Dom La Butte, Amied Shadmaan, Adrien La Butte, Luke Morgan, Stephen Kemp (capt), Adam Williams, Matt Anstey (Steve Arnott), Paul Ivanic (Alvaro Guzman), Daniel Aliffi (Ian Waldon), Carl Valeri.

Best Players:

QAS: Davidson, Weber, Miner.

ACTAS: Giannasca, Morgan, Ivanic.

Theo Katsaros reports that the Northern Spirit

moved into second spot on the league ladder after defeating the Newcastle Breakers by two goals to one. The Spirit leapfrogged Sydney Olympic, who had the bye this week, to gain their highest position on the ladder this season.

James Monie has found the net on numerous occasions for the Spirit and did so once again when he put the visitors into the lead in the 19th minute. The teams went to the break level after John Bennis scored the equaliser for the Breakers after 37 minutes. However, the Spirit stole all three points when Elvis Olic converted a 67th minute penalty.

Sydney Olympic Academy score three times in 17 minutes to condemn the Wollongong Wolves to yet another loss. The Wolves replied in the 63rd minute via Michael Peros but could do nothing more to reduce the deficit.

The 3-1 win for Olympic was their 8th for the season. The goalscorers for the visitors were Ben Jarman after 43 minutes, Yavuz Sabuncuoglu in the 50th minute and Peter Skanavis ten minutes later.

Sydney United played host of the AIS at the Sydney United Sports Centre. Despite scoring again, three goals in his last two matches, Ray Younis could do little more to stop the visitors. The 4-1 win to the AIS surely pleased head coach Steve O'Connor who has struggled to find consistency from his new chargers.

League pace-setters Parramatta Power increased their lead thanks to a 4-1 home victory over the Sydney United Colts. The Power have a six point lead at the top of the table but the chasing clubs all have games in hand over the Power.

Andy Rakic scored in the 32nd minute to give United a shock lead but this lasted just four minutes. Monte Pfrengle levelled the scores before three second half goals sealed a comfortable result for the hosts. Luke Roodenberg, Lachlan Campbell and Brendan Santalab scored the other goals.

Despite going a goal down after nine minutes the Marconi Stallions thumped their Colts tea by eight goals to one. John Peros scored for the Colts early in the match but a barrage of goals followed from their more senior counterparts.

The Stallions led 4-1 at the break and doubled their total in the second stanza. Daniel Severino added a hat-trick to take his tally to 13 for the season. Francis Awaritefe and Harry Karl recorded doubles while Kevo Gulessarian added another.

The Northern Spirit Colts led twice against the Newcastle Breakers Colts at Breakers Stadium but went home disappointed after suffering a 3-2 loss. The Spirit led after eight minutes courtesy of a strike by John Majurovski. The Breakers squared the ledger two minutes later via

By Roy Hay

Two matches were brought forward to this past week-end, the first being a Round 21 game between Bulleen Inter and Albury Wodonga, played on Saturday and resulting in a six-one win for Bulleen.

The other was a Round 13 game in which Carlton and the Victorian Institute of Sport drew one-all at Olympic Park on Sunday.

Bulleen were shocked by an opening goal from Mathew Vaccaro for Albury after only three minutes and it took the home team nearly half an hour before it could equalise through Frank Coniglio.

From then on it was the Adam Curcija show as the young striker hammered in four goals in the second half. The first came in 51 minutes and was followed by three more in 66, 81 and 86 minutes.

Albury conceded an own goal to complete what was a disappointing day on the field for the lads from the border.

The win takes Bulleen into clear third place, equal on points with the VIS but with a slightly inferior goal difference.

Carlton and the VIS played out a highly competitive match at Olympic Park.

George Papadopoulos was sent off for dissent after a booking, reducing Carlton to ten men, but Steve Martin put his team in front around 35 minutes.

The VIS replied soon after following a corner kick which was half-cleared only for Spase Dilevski to strike it cleanly on the volley and it flew into the net.

Watch for this player in future, whom Ernie Merrick sees as a future sweeper for Australian teams. He puts him in the same bracket as the young Ned Zelic and Paul Okon.

The match remained even thereafter and the VIS was reduced to ten men in turn when Jason Dimozantos was sent off. Colin Azzopardi and young David Puccio were the Carlton stars on the day.

SOUTHERN DIVISION NYL

Bulleen Inter 6
Curcija 4, Frank Coniglio,
own goal

Albury Wodonga 1
Vaccaro

Carlton 1
Martin

VIS 1
Dilevski

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Carlton	12	10	2	0	46	7	32
VIS	12	8	1	3	32	10	26
Bulleen Inter Kings	12	8	1	3	36	21	25
Melbourne Knights	11	5	2	4	34	24	17
South Melbourne	10	5	0	5	26	12	15
Gippsland Falcons	10	4	3	3	17	21	15
South Dandenong	11	4	3	4	15	20	15
Fawkner Blues	11	3	3	5	12	24	12
Albury Wodonga	12	2	2	8	17	43	8
Melb. Knights Academy	9	2	0	7	7	16	6
Preston Lions	12	1	1	10	11	55	4

Peter Haynes, Nathan Foti put the visitors ahead once again in the 27th minute.

The Breakers weren't to be denied and scored twice in the second half to take maximum points. Chris Fleming equalised ten minutes after the break before Adam Hughes scored the winner in the 74th minute.

In the late game on Sunday night Wollongong Wolves had a 1-0 away win over NSWIS. The match was deadlocked until the 73rd minute when Jay Lucas finally penetrated the Institute's defence. The lone goal was enough to give the Wolves a hard earned three points.

ROUND 21

Newcastle Breakers 1	Northern Spirit 2
Bennis 37	Monie 19, Olic 67
Wollongong Colts 1	Olympic Academy 3
Peros 63	Jarman 43, Sabuncuoglu 50, Skanavis 60
QAS 0	ACTAS 4
	Anstey 17, Ivanic 65, Guzman 90,90
Sydney United 1	AIS 4
Parramatta Power 4	Sydney United Colts 1
Pfrenge 36, Roodenberg Campbell 63, Santalab 81	Rakic 32
Marconi Colts 1	Marconi Youth 8
Peros 9	Awaritefe 20, 25, Severino 27, 48, 86, Karl 45, 51, Gulessarian 53
Newcastle Colts 3	Northern Spirit Colts 2
Haynes 10, Fleming 55	Majurovski 8, Foti 27
Hughes 74	
NSWIS 0	Wollongong Wolves 1
	Lucas 73
Sydney Olympic - Bye	

Tigers stay top with late Yane Talcevski winner

**CANTERBURY M'VILLE 0
LEICHHARDT TIGERS 1**

Y. Talcevski 85

Sunday night at Lambert Park, Sydney.



By Ben Cubby

Leichhardt Tigers moved to the top of the NSW Super League on Sunday evening with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Canterbury-Marrickville at Henson Park.

The Tigers left it late though, with the winner coming from the boot of former Berries star Yane Talcevski in the 85th minute.

Both teams took a while to get going in the cool, windy conditions, but the match gradually evolved into an absorbing and finely balanced contest.

Canterbury looked the better side early on, and Scott Wells was unlucky not to have broken the deadlock in the 19th minute.

His low shot beat Tigers' keeper Shaun Woods, hit the inside of the post and rolled harmlessly across the face of goal.

In the 27th minute, Jimmy Nikas - the smallest player on the pitch - somehow got his head to a Berries corner and saw his effort cleared off the line by Leichhardt defender Andrew Dowling.

After an indifferent start, the visitors began to hold possession and string some nice passes together.

One interchange culminated in a stinging drive from the impressive Zoki Adioski that brought the best out of Canterbury goalie Frank Mikuletic.

Steve Karavataki raced onto a through-ball in the 38th minute from what appeared to be an offside position.

With everyone else waiting for a whistle that never came, Mikuletic stayed alert and foiled the striker with a brave diving save.

On the stroke of half time, Karavataki nipped in behind the defence to intercept a poor back pass, but Mikuletic again thwarted the Tigers captain, forcing him wide until Joe Ferraro raced back to mop up the danger.

The match continued in the same tightly contested fashion after the break.

Jose Mendes was a standout for the Berries and he has built up a very strong midfield partnership with Wells and the deceptively skillful Zoran Ilic.

Mendes lined up a long range free-kick in the 64th minute and saw his goalbound shot superbly held by the outstretched Shaun Woods.

Shortly afterwards, Steve Christoforidis cut the ball back into the centre after a good run down the right, but Ilic couldn't quite make contact when confronted with an empty net.

At the other end of the park, Leichhardt's Vuko Tomasevic grazed the post with an angled drive and Mikuletic pushed another Adioski shot to safety.

It seemed certain that a goal was coming,

but which side would score it remained anybody's guess.

Leichhardt coach Les DeCelis solved the quandary by bringing on pacy substitute Chris Lansdown with 15 minutes to go.

Just as he did against Eastern Suburbs last week, Lansdown brought a burst of urgency and determination to the Tigers' cause.

In the 85th minute, the Canterbury backline seemed loath to challenge Lansdown as he forged his way into the penalty box and threaded the ball across to Talcevski at the far post.

The former Joey was left to tap the ball into the net from a tight angle for a scrappy but valuable goal.

Lansdown continued to harass the Berries defence in the last few minutes, winning a number of corners and keeping the home side on the back foot.

Jim Nikas spurned a half-chance to equalise during stoppage time when he sent his difficult shot on the turn bouncing wide of the Leichhardt goal.

Canterbury boss John Xipolitas blamed lady luck for the narrow defeat, saying "this was a battle between two good sides."

"We had our chances...it could have gone one way or the other."

Leichhardt's Les DeCelis called this one "a typical top of the table clash."

"They had the first 25 minutes but we were able to come back. We've got a great young team."

Karavatki again made a lively contribution for the Tigers and he was well supported by Adioski, Dowling and the solid Blago Milicevic.

Mendes, Wells and Christoforidis turned in good performances for the losing side.

Leichhardt's Under-21 side also showed their character, with late goals to Dean Spresian and Greg Fuchs earning them a 2-0 win.

Canterbury: Mikuletic, Raeburn (Ioannou 18), Molachino, Ilic (Galloway 77), Mendes, Wells, Kotsopoulos, Christoforidis, Nikas, Markopoulos, Ferraro (Vizzari 45).

Leichhardt: Woods, Milicevic, Dowling, Galluzzo, Tomasevic, Stubbs-Mills, Bruni (Lansdown 73), Karavataki, Nicol, Adioski, Y. Talcevski.

Meanwhile at Melita Stadium, two of last year's Eagles and Macarthur Rams played out an entertaining 3-3 draw, which followed a tight first half in which the Eagles struck through Alex Trposki.

The Eagles led 3-2 near the end, but a late goal by Chad Bishop saved a point for the Rams whose earlier goals came from Matthew O'Shea and Danial Cummins.

The other Eagles men to score were Mal Meilak and Adam Anderson.

Super League Tables

FIRST GRADE:	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
LEICHHARDT TIGERS	6	5	1	0	18	9	16	9
Central Coast Coasties	6	4	2	0	14	4	14	10
Canterbury Marrickville	6	4	0	2	14	11	12	3
Blacktown City Demons	6	3	1	2	15	6	10	9
St George Saints	6	3	1	2	9	8	10	1
Bankstown City Lions	6	2	3	1	9	6	9	3
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	6	3	0	3	15	14	9	1
Sutherland Sharks	6	3	0	3	10	16	9	-6
Macarthur Rams	6	1	3	2	9	9	6	0
Parramatta Eagles	6	1	3	2	11	13	6	-2
Manly Warringah Dolphins	6	1	3	2	8	10	6	-2
Fairfield Bulls	6	1	2	3	8	11	5	-3
Penrith Panthers	6	1	1	5	3	20	4	-17
Eastern Suburbs	6	1	0	5	6	12	3	-6

UNDER 21

LEICHHARDT TIGERS	6	4	1	1	14	7	13	7
Central Coast Coasties	6	4	1	1	8	5	13	3
Penrith Panthers	6	4	0	2	15	10	12	5
Blacktown City Demons	6	3	2	1	9	8	11	1
Parramatta Eagles	6	3	1	2	11	9	10	2
Manly Warringah	6	3	0	3	13	10	9	3
Canterbury Marrickville	6	3	0	3	14	13	9	1
Macarthur Rams	6	3	0	3	7	11	9	-4
Fairfield Bulls	6	2	2	2	11	10	8	1
St George Saints	6	1	3	2	8	7	6	1
Eastern Suburbs	6	1	3	2	9	12	6	-3
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	6	1	2	3	6	10	5	-4
Sutherland Sharks	6	1	2	3	8	15	5	-7
Bankstown City Lions	6	0	1	5	6	12	1	-6

UNDER 18

LEICHHARDT TIGERS	6	4	2	0	15	7	14	8
Blacktown City Demons	6	4	2	0	10	3	14	7
Parramatta Eagles	6	4	1	1	14	4	13	10
Fairfield Bulls	6	4	0	2	12	9	12	3
Macarthur Rams	6	3	2	1	7	4	11	3
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	6	2	2	2	8	5	8	3
Central Coast Coasties	6	2	2	2	13	11	8	2
Bankstown City Lions	6	2	2	2	6	9	8	-3
Penrith Panthers	6	1	4	1	7	6	7	1
Eastern Suburbs	6	1	3	2	9	13	6	-4
Sutherland Sharks	6	1	1	4	8	10	4	-2
St George Saints	6	1	1	4	5	20	4	-15
Manly Warringah Dolphins	6	1	0	5	6	11	3	-5
Canterbury Marrickville	6	0	2	4	5	13	2	-8

SUPER LEAGUE



ROUND SEVEN

Saturday 19 February

St George v Sutherland Sharks - St George Stadium

Bonnyrigg White Eagles v Central Coast - Serbian Centre

Macarthur Rams v Blacktown City - Lynwood Park

Penrith Panthers v Fairfield Bulls - Andrews Road Field

Manly Warringah v Eastern Suburbs - Cromer Park

Leichhardt Tigers v Bankstown Lions - Lambert Park

Sunday 20 February

Canterbury Marrick v Parramatta Eagles - Henson Park

Manly Warringah v Eastern Suburbs - Cromer Park

(U18s - 5pm)

Games 7.00pm (1st grade)-5.00pm (21s)-3.00pm (18s)
unless otherwise stated.

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FIRST GRADE:
PENRITH PANTHERS 2
G Tehliwec 32m, D Hinton 82m
SUTHERLAND SHARKS 1
G McDonald 76m
FAIRFIELD BULLS 0
MANLY WARRINGAH 0
CENTRAL COAST COASTIES 1
S Sontag 73m
ST GEORGE SAINTS 1
G Maglis 96m
BLACKTOWN CITY 3
N Imaya 69m, P Yates 79m, M Hagger 86m
BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES 4
J Mancino 15,37m, J Ghiso 25,34m
PARRAMATTA EAGLES 3
A Trpkoski 42m, M Melik 55m, A Anderson 87m
MACARTHUR RAMS 3
M O'Shea 46m, D Cummins 70m, C Bishop 87m
CANTERBURY M'VILLE 0
LEICHHARDT TIGERS 1

Demons almost pull off incredible comeback

BLACKTOWN CITY 3

Imaya 67, Yates 79, Hagger 86

BONNYRIGG W/EAGLES 4

Mancino 14, 37, Ghiso 24, 33.

At the Gabbie Stadium, Seven Hills.



MATCH STATS

Blacktown City Demons: Greco, Foxe, Lowe, Langan, Bradley (Riches 80), Dee (Hagger 80), Sermanni, Brown, Richardson, (Yates 45), Bennett, Imaya.

Bonnyrigg: Bozic, Green (Utesenovic 68), Dragas, Reid, Mancino (Crnokrak 80), Harding, Ghiso, Devrimol, Hawrysiuk (Gun 71), van Bentum.

Blacktown Demons went down 3-4 to rivals Bonnyrigg White Eagles in a pulsating Round Six match at the Gabbie Stadium last Saturday evening.

It was a classic case of a 'game' of two halves' with Bonnyrigg storming to a four goal lead in the first half and the Demons pulling three goals back in the second period.

Three great crosses in the first ten minutes from City wide man, Damien

Brown, resulted in near misses from headers by Damon Langan and Jason Bennett but disguised the onslaught that was about to occur.

Bonnyrigg, out-playing and out-thinking the defending champions, soon had Blacktown chasing shadows as they asserted their authority and within a twenty-three minute period marched into a commanding lead.

Javier Mancino knocked in two headers in the 14th and 37th minutes and the mercurial Johnny Ghiso helped himself to two opportunistic chances in the 24th and 33rd minutes that had the Demons reeling and desperately hanging on until the break.

Coach Brian Brown's half-time talk must have hit the right spot as the Demons emerged a different side in the second half. It was now Blacktown's turn to take the initiative as they fired in shots on Bonnyrigg's goal from all angles. The pressure paid off in the 69th minute when Naoki Imaya pounced on a Langan pass to open Blacktown's account with his first goal for the Demons.

One minute later Imaya turned provider, setting up Chris Bradley just inside the box but with the goal at his mercy he screwed his shot over the bar for what would turn out to be a costly miss.

Paul Yates' well placed header from

Brown's free-kick in the 79th minute narrowed the gap and gave the Blacktown faithful reason to believe they could still salvage something from the game and seven minutes later the game was set up for a thrilling finish when the Demons notched their third.

Peter Sermanni threaded a ball through to Mark Hagger and as he neared the edge of the area he fired hard and low, the ball just squeezing under the keeper's body on its way into the net, for his third goal in as many games.

The crowd of just over 1,000 were now on the edge of their seats but a complete Blacktown revival was not to be as Bonnyrigg held on for the three competition points.

Eastern Suburbs managed their first points of the season in beating the hitherto undefeated Bankstown City Lions 2-0 at David Phillips Field. A Craig Sharpley free kick and a good goal on the hour by Jimmy Aschner were enough to see off a strong challenge by the visitors, in fading light.

The win was not enough to lift Easts off the bottom with Penrith winning on Saturday, but they are now back in touch with the pack.

Penrith Panthers celebrated their first ever Super League win when a last minute strike from Danny Hinton spoilt Sutherland's elation at snatching an 88th minute equaliser to Garth Tehliwic's first half goal for the home side.

The 2-1 win follows three consecutive thrashings for the Panthers, in which



Demons' Matthew Lowe

they conceded 14 goals and failed to score, thus it was a huge boost for the Andrews Road crowd.

St George left it until 6 minutes into stoppage time to snatch a draw at Plum Park in Central Coast's first appearance at home this season.

Substitute George Maglis undid the good work of Coast midfielder, 19 year-old Stuart Sontag, who had opened the scoring in the 72nd minute.

Fairfield Bulls and Manly Warringah played out a 0-0 draw at Nineveh Field in a game which was well fought and even.

ROCKETS AND SAPPORO IN EXCITING 3-3 DRAW

By Nick Guoth

The 2000 WIN TV Federation Cup draw took place last Wednesday at the Heritage Hotel in Canberra. There was a change of format for this year's event owing to the lower number of participants.

With 13 teams nominating for the competition, three groups were created; two with four teams and one with five. Each group will play a round robin over three weeks.

All ten Premier League teams for the upcoming year plus three other teams nominated for the Federation Cup with the top four teams from last year's Cup being seeded and the other nine teams being drawn randomly by the ACT Minister for Sport, Bill Stefaniak.

Group 1 consists of holders Canberra Olympic, Weston Creek Royals, newly promoted Tuggeranong United and the Capital City Suns.

In Group 2 we have runner's up Canberra Deakin, University of Canberra Pumas, White Eagles and the Burns Club.

Finally in Group 3 are the remaining 5 teams. Monaro and Belconnen United who took the minor-placings last season are pitted against Gungahlin Juventus, the Australian National University and the O'Connor Knights.

Last season's Cup Final was between Canberra Olympic and Canberra Deakin.

It turned out to be a one-sided affair with Olympic overwhelming their opponents by a scoreline of 6-2.

Njegosh Popovich was the destroyer netting four goals on the day with Alex Castro and Robert Grande grabbing the

other two. For Deakin Paul Ivanic and Ben Deighan scored.

In the third place playoff Monaro took out a tight tussle by 2-1. Scorers for Monaro were Alex Tine and Joe Campagna who came back from a goal behind following an early Marko Perinovic strike.

With the Sydney 2000 Olympics being held in September all events are being pushed forward and hence the Federation Cup will be purely a pre-season event for 2000.

The Final is to be held at Jamison Oval on Sunday March 26th.

The opening match of the Cup is to be played as part of an open day for Bruce Stadium on Sunday February 20th with the rest of the competitors fighting it out the following Sunday. The match will be played out between Monaro and Gungahlin Juventus.

Groups 1 and 2 will continue to play only on Sundays whilst Group 3, to fit in the extra round, will use the two Wednesday nights over the three week period.

For the Semi-Finals, to be held on Monday March 20th, the Winner of Group 1 will play the Runner's up of Group 3 whilst the Winner of Group 2 will go up against the Winner of Group 3.

Whilst Olympic and Deakin appear to have the easier run it appears more likely, owing to the transfer moves during the summer, that the winner of the competition will come from the larger Group 3.

ACT Rockets v Consadole Sapporo

An old head was too wise and wonderful as he not only provided

action in the opposing goalmouth, but at the death of the game he deprived the visitors of a last gasp win.

We are talking about one Jimmy Baxter who, as the oldest player on the pitch, scored two vital goals for the ACT Rockets and then cleared off the line with seconds left in the match to preserve a 3-3 scoreline in the exciting match against the visiting Consadole Sapporo of Hokkaido, Japan.

The game started well for the visitors from Japan. In the 12th minute Tatsuya Murata put through Emerson, but the Brazilian was hustled off the ball by Elli Salloum. Then four minutes later a ball down the right released Hiromasa Suguri to pull back for Ryugi Bando to finish.

The ACT Rockets were rarely threatening with the three Brazilians across the midfield controlling most of the game. The rare attack from the home team was easily snuffed out.

The second half did not open well for the ACT as a cross from Biju went behind the defence and finished off by Bando to give his side a two goal lead. Biju nearly extended the lead only a minute later but Ian Jeffries pulled off a spectacular save.

It took a little while, but the ACT were finally able to get into their stride. In the 66th minute John Rakic was part of a trick corner kick that fooled the Japanese.

He sent a low cross into the box which Jimmy Baxter finished off to bring it back to 2-1.

Just over ten minutes on and Consadole had regained their two goal advantage. A free kick from the right by Almir beat absolutely everyone allowing Tomotaka Fukagawa to tap in at the far post.

Yet only three minutes later the scoreboard attendant was troubled again. A free kick from some 30m out by Rakic was floated in to the far post and beat everyone including the keeper, as it slid into the top right corner.

And two more minutes on a long corner from Rakic went to Baxter at the far post. His looping header beat the keeper and snuck in for the equaliser.

Then, into time added-on, a cross from Ryuji Tabuchi found Tomohiko Ikeuchi unmarked on the edge of the box. His shot beat the substitute keeper Doug Hyson, but as it slowly rolled towards the line Baxter came out of nowhere to clear the ball to safety.

Thus ended a rather exciting match with a fair result in the end.

Rockets coach Ian Heywood was happy with the team's performance but wanted to have more opportunities to play during the season.

There were a number of locals missing through injury and illness, so he knows his team can play much better.

ACT Rockets: I. Jeffries (D. Hyson 75), E. Salloum (T. Tran 68), J. Baxter, D. Macor, J. Nelson (L. Pietruski 68), J. Rakic, D. North, O. Zamora, S. Lazzari (P. Phommaseisy 63), S. Manson (J. Whittingham 35)

Consadole Sapporo: Y. Sato (Y. Fujigaya 61), H. Mori (R. Tabuchi 61), K. Omori, Y. Nonomura (T. Fukagawa HT), Biju, Emerson (T. Ikeuchi 61), Almir, R. Bando (Y. Kawamura 61), T. Furukawa, T. Murata, H. Suguri

Saints show new boys how tough VPL can be

St Albans Saints 3 Oakleigh Cannons 0

By Mark Fisher

Kon Sianidis stamped his authority on a game that initially offered plenty of chances to both sides. The St Albans forward made sure his team came home with a flurry, particularly in the last twenty-five minutes when the goal the Saints were attacking became something of a shooting gallery.

Oakleigh, still new to the intensity of the Eat Well Live Well Victorian Premier League, did however start the stronger of the two teams, with Dimos Sevastiadis prominent early with some running through the centre. He had the first chance of the game by the 18th minute, when he connected with a short cross from Georgakopoulos but sent his shot wide.

St Albans did aid the visitors with plenty of first half errors, particularly in the passing department. This they could ill afford to do as they were playing a very attacking 3-4-3 formation.

They practically gave another chance to Sevastiadis when poor marking allowed the big striker to volley from a chance at the near post, but he again fired wide.

Totally against the run of play, Ivan Zilic broke through the centre, and after slipping past the experienced Bill Tsiakos and then by rounding Mariano Calomino, Zilic backed himself with a strike at goal.

His shot rifled past a diving Nick Koletsas, giving Zilic a goal to celebrate his birthday with in the 24th minute of the match.

St Albans still held back a little for the remainder of the half, and the game got bogged down in midfield for some time.

Just before the break Richard Hrehorisin managed a shot which brought a good reflex parry from Koletsas, after he gave his marker the slip.

The Saints must have been content with their first half efforts, considering they still trailed their opponents in possession terms.

The second half saw the Oakleigh

Cannons stretch forward in the pursuit of an equaliser, and this in turn gave the St Albans midfield all the space it needed to pounce.

Whilst Billy Nalpantidis looked the most threatening with a couple of low shots at goal, he never truly threatened the Saints' custodian Mario Vunder.

Coach Mick Peterson had made two crucial substitutions in the 61st minute, bringing on ex-Knights striker Mijo Trupkovic as well as Matt Urlovic, sibling to the Knight's Paul Urlovic.

It proved a masterstroke, with the two immediately cutting the Cannons' defence to ribbons. After only four minutes on the field, Ivo Razov ran inside of Neil Wallace in the box, and offloaded to Urlovic to blast high into the net past Koletsas. Two-nil the score to St Albans.

Kon Sianidis took the game well out of reach when he turned on a sustained display of attack down the right flank.

The Oakleigh defence, now quite demoralised, tried in vain to keep the Saints attackers out of the 18-yard box. Sianidis' efforts were rewarded in a personal sense when he bagged a goal in the 88th minute, by putting away a deft cross from Matt Urlovic.

He nearly owned a brace when he wove through Tsiakos and Wallace and blasted into the net, only to belatedly observe the linesman flagging him for being in an offside position.

It isn't time to throw the form-book out the window just yet, but if Mick Peterson can continue to extract this type of performances from his charges, we could be in for a very intriguing time ahead in the Eat Well Live Well Victorian Premier League.

ST ALBANS

Vunder, Milardovic, Klarich, Vojtek, Hrehorisin, Mrak, Dragicevic, Razov (Jurjevic), Sianidis, Movric (Urlovic), Zilic (Trupkovic)

OAKLEIGH

Koletsas, Wallace, Georgakopoulos, Rosman, Tsiakos, Calomino, Mitroulas, Daoulas, Nalpantidis, Aridas (Wegener), Sevastiadis

Best Players:

3. SIANIDIS (ST ALBANS)

2. Urlovic (St Albans)
1. Nalpantidis (Oakleigh)

The Bentleigh Greens Soccer Club has instituted one of the most aggressive overseas scouting regimes for some time in the Victorian State scene.

The club's board members announced to me last Friday that they have a focus on drawing players from that perennial talent zone South America.

In fact, the club has two scouts based in the Americas, with another one located in Holland and yet another in the UK.

Club Secretary Tony Antoniou revealed the philosophy behind the club's recruitment system.

"We have retained the nucleus of the squad from the last three to four years, and have looked to strengthen it with good overseas signings".

And if you were inclined to think that Bentleigh were heading down the same road as many NSL clubs by signing retirement-bound former stars, think again.

There is a minimum age criterion that applies with regards to Bentleigh's foreign imports, and the club has set this cut-off at 23. On top of that, the players that are considered must have previously demonstrated potential in a competitive overseas league.

Recent signee Diego Gavazzi, an ex-River Plate player, is one who clearly fitted the bill. At 23 (not twenty-five as previously stated), he is at an age where he could make his mark in Australia over quite a long term.

Indeed, if he can demonstrate the prowess that former Bentleigh import Alex Moreira did two years ago with the club, then he might be able to set his sights on an NSL berth of his own.

Club officials were delighted that by mid-week the Argentine's clearance had come through from the Chilean FA, where he last played first division football. He has also previously starred in the Israeli first division for one of the Haifa-based clubs. It is expected that Gavazzi will perform a central midfield role, providing a vital link between defence and goal scoring.

One shouldn't be surprised if the arrival of players like Gavazzi herald an import flurry within the Eat Well Live Well Victorian Premier League. As one Bentleigh official sees it, "it is getting to the stage that we have to import players in orders to replace the young Australian talent that is continually heading overseas".

In other squad news, Gippsland have released attacker Will Hastie, who mostly resided on the substitute's bench during the first half of this NSL season, and his return should bolster the Greens' line-up.

Other players likely to have a significant impact include striker Sasha Markovski, who scored six goals last VPL season for the now-relegated Westvale, and full back Harry Micheil, who was very solid for the Greens last season.

Also important to the side's prospects this year are the pacy Stelios Drakos (scored eight goals last season) and Jim McDonagh, who finished third in the league in the prestigious Ross Medal count.

Whilst Bentleigh's team seems impressive, they know they will be in for an incredible challenge this season, with Green Gully and Bulleen widely cited by various club officials as the most significant challengers for the 2000 premiership.

In matters off the park, there seems to a high degree of interest around the club regarding the NSL 2nd Division. It was pointed out though that the club might only be interested in joining if the financial pre-requisites were within reach.

It seems a certainty that Bentleigh will finish in the top half of the ladder in 2000, yet if their new import Gavazzi fires consistently, the general prognosis may become even more favourable as the season draws on.

In weekend results, Bentleigh were at home to the Fawkner Blues on Sunday. Diego Gavazzi indeed made an instant impact in the league by scoring the first goal in a 3-1 win for the Greens. Sasha Markovski also netted a goal for Bentleigh. See the Eat Well Live Well Victorian Premier League Results for more details.

VPL TABLE

P W D L F A PTS

GREEN GULLY CAV	2	2	0	0	7	1	6
Altona East Phoenix	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
St Albans Saints	2	1	1	0	5	2	4
Bentleigh Greens	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Port Melb. Sharks	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Oakleigh Cannons	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Altona Magic	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Melbourne Raiders	1	0	1	0	2	3	1
Preston Lions	2	0	2	0	1	1	1
Bulleen Zebras	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Fawkner Blues	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Heidelberg United	2	0	0	2	2	8	0

FIRST GRADE:

ALTONA EAST PHOENIX 2
T Antoniadis N Papadopoulos

PRESTON LIONS 1
D Panay

BENTLEIGH GREENS 3

G Kalimeris D Gavazzi S Markovski

FAWKNER BLUES 1

M Collins

ST ALBANS SAINTS 3

I Zilic M Urlovic K Sianidis

OAKLEIGH CANNONS 0

GREEN GULLY CAVALIERS 5

Becvinovski (2), Mangos, Mecevski,
Marianos

HEIDELBERG UNITED 1

S Stefanidis



VICTORIAN PREMIER LEAGUE



eat well live well



ROUND THREE

Friday 18 February

Oakleigh v Altona Magic

Jack Edwards Reserve - 8.15(First Grade)/6.15(Reserves)

Port Melbourne Sharks v Heidelberg United

SS Anderson Reserve - 8.15(First Grade)/6.15(Reserves)

Sunday 20 February

Green Gully Cavaliers v St Albans Saints

Green Gully Reserve - 7.00(First Grade)/5.00(Reserves)

Fawkner Blues v Bulleen Zebras - CB Smith Reserve

Preston Lions v Bentleigh Greens - BT Connor Reserve

Altona East Phoenix v Melbourne Raiders - Paisley Reserve

Games 6.00pm (1st grade)- 4.00pm (Reserves)

unless otherwise stated.

The next generation of Matildas is looked at by IS's star female player ...

Annisa Tann Darby

At thirty two years of age, I realise as a player that the future lies in youth. The Australian team currently is made up of a vast mixture of ages, however the most promising aspect of this mixture is the fact that there are some outstanding younger players already in the squad.

Currently our squad consists of 22 players, outside this squad there also exists a large contingent of players under the age of 20 who will represent Australia in the future.

Peita-Claire Heppelin (PC) at 18 is one of those players considered young with an experienced head! First selected in the Australian team last year at the age of 17 when we toured Portugal and participated in the Algarve Cup.

PC made her international debut against Portugal and also played in the following game against China. She is an exceptionally talented and intelligent midfielder with outstanding vision and composure on the ball.

She has been playing for the Canberra Eclipse for the past three years and produced some outstanding performances for her team throughout the Summer League Series.

Since the change in coaching structure, PC has been given more of a chance to expose the talent that she has and over the past few months has started to push for a place in the first eleven.

Another player that I have played with for years in the NSW team is Kelly Golebiowski, although only 18 she would have to be one of the best if not the best dribblers in this country. People think that Chi Chi Mendez can dribble well maybe they should see Kelly!

She was the youngest player to represent Australia when she made her full debut at the tender age of 14.

Unfortunately after her debut Kelly suffered a knee injury which was to keep her out of the Australian team for almost a year.

Nicknamed Kele, her left foot is more lethal than Mel Gibson! Sometimes her mouth is just as lethal as well but it's good to see players that young with so much passion for the game.

Kele has played for NSW since she was twelve - prior to that she could be found playing in the boys competition she was that good.

With players like Kele around the Matildas are always getting free kicks as the only way the opposition can stop her is by fouling her, which in a way I appreciate as I usually get to take a number of free kicks and all my goals for Australia have been from dead ball situations.

So maybe I owe Kele a few assists.

A quiet achiever with the Matildas and still only 19 is Amy Wilson, another Canberra Eclipse product.

First selected in the Australian team in 1996 for the tri-series in New Zealand at 15. She made her full international debut against South Korea and hasn't looked back since.

Amy currently plays in midfield and is blessed with the fact that she can competently use either foot and for this reason you can find her playing anywhere in midfield.

One game she is on the left, next in the middle and then next game you will find her playing on the right.

She is an extremely intelligent footballer with excellent vision and distribution, and like PC has been able to establish herself in the first eleven under the new coaching regime.

Willow as we call her, or "Wilson" has a number of other talents outside soccer and most people in the team believe that she could be a comedian in later life.

Personally I think she should take up a career in music as her rap songs especially her



PC Heppelin (extreme left) and Kelly Golebiowski (extreme right), two of the up-and-coming Matildas.

Christmas tunes are of rare quality!

The Queensland Academy of Sport has also produced a number of talented young players and one of their best is Alicia Ferguson. Alicia is also only 19 and like Amy was selected in the Australian team at the age of 15 for our European tour and made her full international debut against Hungary.

Alicia was selected in the inaugural intake for the Australian Institute of Sport and since then has come on in leaps and bounds.

One of the few players to have retained their scholarship for the entire period of the program. Alicia or "Eesh" is one of those great strikers that can shake you off at the drop of a hat, one minute she's there, next minute she's scored.

She is exceptionally strong on the ball, and makes intelligent runs off the ball and has one of the best first touches in the team. Like Amy she has great talents off the park, and her impersonations and singing quality are up there with the best.

Queensland have a number of outstanding players coming through who are all under the age of 19.

Recently Belinda Dawney came into camp for a week, and proved that the depth of talent in Australia is phenomenal.

Most of the players couldn't work out her nickname, Binga, bingo, dingo, I don't know, but one thing we did work out by the end of the week was that no one could catch her. Her pace was electrifying, even when we played the boys they were not able to catch her.

Over the week she was able to score a number of goals against both the men's teams and the boys and is another great talent for the future.

I remember playing against her in the Summer league and didn't appreciate all the running I had to do, even I struggled to keep up with her. Must be that 14 years age difference!

Heather Garrock is also only 17 and was only recently included in the AIS program. Her left foot and dribbling skills are also a pleasure to watch.

She made her full debut for Australia in November 1999 against China after Bridgette Starr was injured and she was called into action after 20 minutes.

She was then selected in our recent Australia Cup series and has proved to be an outstanding asset for the Matildas. Heather has played for NSW for the past four years and was a member of the winning '97 and '99 team

So as you can see from this handful of players that the future of women's soccer is looking good, and with the coaching quality of Chris Tansey, the other countries had better take note when the Olympics come around.

Not only are the girls looking for a great performance in the Olympics but also the next World Cup and for these young players the next World Cup and the one after that!

Sticca quits for family reasons

By Aidan Ormond

Starting your own Soccer club from scratch is not a small commitment. Over the last four years Carlton has been Lou Sticca's baby. Needless to say, the time and effort has taken its toll on his family life, and so it was with this in mind that Sticca, the club's GM, called it quits late last week.

He will however have a "consultant role" with the club, but it was clear from his emotional state, that running Carlton has taken much out of the 39-year-old and his family (he is married with three boys.)

"Well, I could never quit completely," said Sticca (right) in a wavering voice. "It's my club. I've given up a lot both from a time point of view and financially, it's just a situation where I've made contacts and experience and I feel I want to use it."

"I've had approaches from overseas regarding player acquisitions so it's something I would like to explore at this stage of my life. It's not anyway 'jumping ship'. No-one could ever force me out of Carlton, it's my club. I may not own it as much as others do, but emotionally, I own it 100%."



"If it's for the betterment of the club that the club is not seen as my club then so be it. I believe I've left the club in a fantastic position," he said.

Carlton is owned by Network Sports which has shares in the club.

"I can't do any more for the club ... sure I've made mistakes and I'm the first one to own up to that. We've (Carlton) certainly made our mark in Soccer."

Sticca's position at the club is not expected to be filled at this late point in the season.

"I have a desire to remain involved in soccer ... it's my passion, but my wife and kids have made an enormous sacrifice to help me put this project in place. I loved it but it does take its toll."

Continued from page seven

Christian, what do you consider to be a romantic night out?

Dinner at a restaurant, followed by a ice-cream, and a walk along the beach.

Has this been played out?

Yes!

On a recent visit to Sydney I noticed that you attract your fair share of female adoration. Are these autograph hunters, female friends, or die-hard soccer supporters?

They fall into each category.

How would you spend your last \$50?

Play the lottery, or back No. 7 on a horse.

Are you a boxers or a briefs guy?

G-string.

If you could have any supernatural power what would it be?

To be invincible on the soccer field, and become a magnet for good-looking chicks!

Which famous person have you been told you look like?

The guy from 'Savage Garden' - Darren Hayes - when I had long hair.

Do you know of any pre-match mishaps?

Francis, running out with his shorts back to front.

Describe your ideal woman?

Knows how to cook, clean, is understanding to soccer duty, good looking, great personality!

Complete this sentence, "Love is...."

"Love is when you can't get

enough of one person."

If you could have box seats to any event in the world, what would it be?

A World Cup final, or a Mike Tyson fight.

What is the biggest misconception about sportsmen?

That they're all sleazies, with no brains.

Which member of your squad would top Cleo's most eligible bachelor list?

Mark Babic.

Where would you rate?

Top two.

Which team-mate could do with a new wardrobe?

Darren McDonald - he likes the baggy, surfy look.

Which member of the Marconi of the Marconi squad is most likely to be caught dancing on a podium at a nightclub?

Brendan Renaud goes hard.

Who has the most unusual nickname in the team?

Dominic Longo - 'Slongy'

Vlado Zoric - 'Butt Plug'

Have you thought about a career after soccer?

Hopefully I don't have to.

What is your most cherished possession?

My car.

If you were to star in a Hollywood movie, who would be your leading lady?

Liz Hurley.

Do you follow any pre-match rituals or superstitions?

I always have a cross tied to the side of my shorts.

AUSSIE COACH BUZZETTI IN VANUATU



Former South Australian-based coach Carlos Buzzetti.

By Stephen Webb in Vanuatu

Carlos Buzzetti, technical director and national coach with the Vanuatu Football Federation, has settled in well to his position. Interestingly, Buzzetti has an Aussie connection.

Last August Buzzetti, former director of coaching for the South Australia Soccer Federation and assistant coach with Australia's national youth teams, began a four-year term in charge of Vanuatu soccer.

His first task was to restructure the coaching set-up. Vanuatu's four national teams - senior, Olympic, under-20 and under-17 - came under his control. "My main duties are to design and implement a new system in the country that will bring Vanuatu with the rest of the world - of course in few years to come yet."

Buzzetti said he had resisted approaches from Vanuatu over the years but decided the time was right after ten years with the South Australian federation.

Buzzetti arrived in Australia from Uruguay 26 years ago. He had no English but spoke with his skilful feet. He now says the best international language is what you can do with the ball.

During 1980-81 he attended and qualified as a senior coach in the Australian National Coaching Scheme and was offered the position of instructor with the South Australian Soccer Federation.

Since then he became state coach and in 1989 was offered the new full-time position of Development Officer with the SASF. In 1990 he was nominated Director of Coaching, a position he held until his departure to Vanuatu.

Buzzetti, an Oceania Football Confederation and FIFA instructor, also

assisted Australia's national coaches with various squads and for the last 18 months was assistant coach to Les Scheinflug with the U/17 and U/20 squads.

He described his first coaching course under the new development system in Vanuatu as a great success. He said it was very difficult to work in such hot and humid conditions but unfortunately the weather in the islands was unpredictable.

During the junior and intermediate course in Vila's old Stadium he told his charges about training in tropical conditions, about how to deal with the sun and rain, and the importance of rest and refreshment.

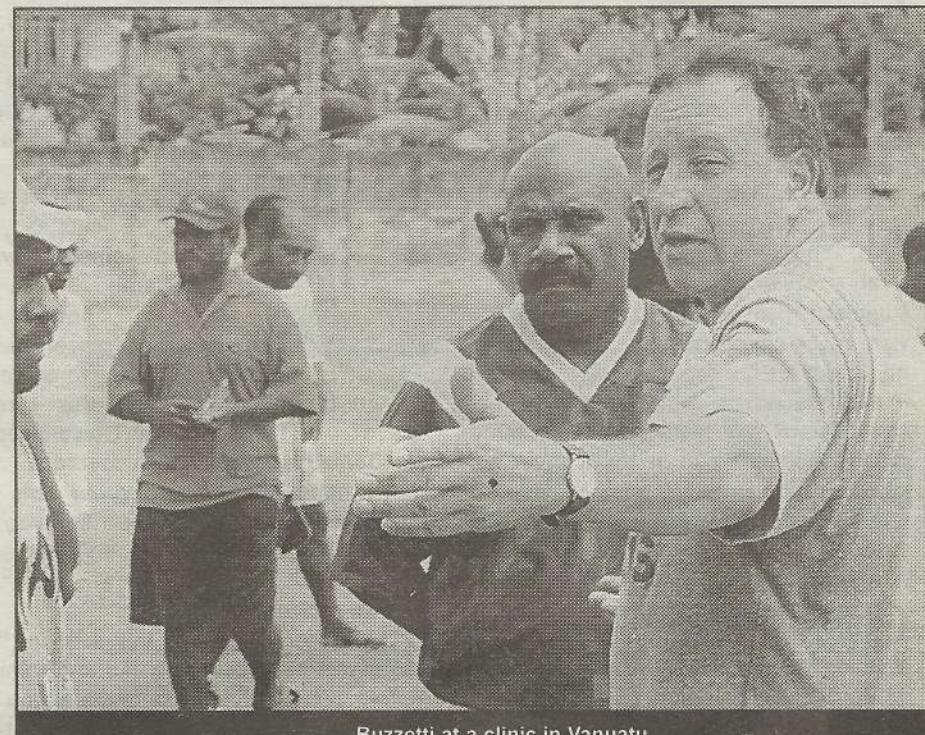
He taught numerous drills but, more importantly, how the coaches could retain authority and get the best from their players.

He spoke to them about the need for mutual respect and treating people as equals.

Buzzetti said, "Even if the country does not have the technology, money, equipment and big amount of players (the total population of 170,000 people is spread over 75 islands) the main game in the country is football."

"About 95 per cent of the men and now a big percentage of women play the game. They have great natural ability and strong legs and are very quick. They will provide the coaches with very good raw material to work with."

He said the Port Vila League alone had three divisions of eight clubs in each division. The majority of the clubs also had an U/20 squad and he was investigating if they would be willing to have a combined 12-13-14 league and 15-16-17 league.



Buzzetti at a clinic in Vanuatu.

before we can compete on equal terms."

He has started to implement programs he presented at the federation's AGM last year which were accepted unanimously.

"Currently we are finalising the U/17 and U/20 squads and working with the senior squad for the Melanesian Cup in Fiji in April. The first two teams will play against Australia and New Zealand for the Continental Cup in June in Tahiti. In August there's the World Cup Qualification."

Vanuatu's women's seniors will play in Tahiti in June in the Melanesian/Polyesian Cup and the first

of Football.

"Also we will have some meetings this month with the Minister of Sport and also the Minister of Education with regard to implementing a junior system in the country where we'll send our development officers to the primary and secondary schools to do soccer sessions."

"The more difficult part, due to the distances between islands, is to implement all these programs in the other six associations, in the north and south of the country."

After a career which involved much international travel and accommodation in five-star hotels Buzzetti now finds himself travelling to islands where there are no chairs or tables and where he must coach people who live a subsistence existence.

But Buzzetti said he was raised in poverty and had easily adjusted.

Buzzetti loves football. He played from age six to 40 and first appeared in Uruguay's national league when aged 15.

"I started to coach at 17 years of age during my playing career in Uruguay and this year will be my 37th year as a coach."

He says his wife has been understanding about his passion for the game but he still regrets that constant travelling with Australian teams meant he was unable to see his own child growing.

He still tells his coaches that the game deserves 200 per cent dedication - but they mustn't forget their families.

Vanuatu, ranked 184 in the world, has been drawn with New Zealand, Tahiti, Solomon Islands and the Cook Islands in the first round draw for the Oceania qualifying competition of the 2002 World Cup.

In the preliminary round of Oceania qualifiers for the 1998 World Cup Vanuatu didn't make it to the semi-finals after drawing with the Solomon Islands and losing to Papua New Guinea.



The women's competition started a league in 1999 but many teams that applied were left out for lack of soccer grounds.

Futsal is also very strong in Vanuatu and, Buzzetti said, would be much stronger this year.

Buzzetti said he had great hopes for football in Vanuatu, "but at the same time I'm realistic enough to see the advantages the other countries like Australia, New Zealand and even Fiji have on us at the moment. We have a huge job ahead of us

two teams will play later against Australia and New Zealand. And in Tonga in August the women's U/18s will play the first championships ever.

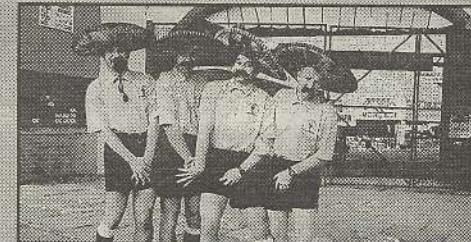
On January 31 the Vanuatu Football Federation opened new offices - the first island in the region to have its own offices - with the attendance of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, many politicians and many other dignitaries.

Buzzetti said, "At the moment we are in discussion with the Government for the release of some land to create new soccer grounds and my proposal for an Academy



The Four Diegos

with Socceroo hardman Kevin Muscat



Diegos: "You play for Wolverhampton Wanderers, a big English first division club that many experts say should be in the Premier League. The club is bankrolled by a successful businessman, Sir Jack Hayward who has put so much money into the club that he refers to himself as the 'Golden Tit'. The pressure to succeed is high."

How is the team going at present? Is this finally going to be the year that the team will get promoted to the Premier League?"

Muscat: "The team is going very well and, of course, we do hope to get promoted to Premier League. I have been lucky already to enjoy one promotion season while I was at Crystal Palace.

"Premier league is really the place to be. We have positioned ourselves into play-off contention and, hopefully, with

success. I always knew he was a class player and good enough for the highest level."

Diegos: "It's not often that a player like yourself, born to hate 'nancy-boy' type wingers, gets the opportunity to play against the 'King of nancy-boy' type wingers, Brazil's Denilson. You got that opportunity in last November's two match series between the Socceroos and Brazil. What was it like playing against one of the world's great dribblers and what were your thoughts on the much maligned two-match series?"

Muscat: "I treated the series with great respect, especially since the new management gave me an opportunity that I did not get over the last several years with the Socceroos. It was a chance to make things count. I needed to perform well for the new manager and impress him enough to be selected the next time. I always knew that I would be up against Denilson; there was no where else where he was going to play except the left side."

"Overall I was happy with my efforts and I think the series went well for Frank."

"It gave everyone the opportunity to observe each other's talents. He is a good coach and personally, I got along with him quite well and I believe most of the squad did too."

Diegos: "Club versus country disputes are a fact of life for Aussie footballers plying their trade overseas. You didn't escape this problem in the aftermath of the Brazil series with Wolves manager, Colin Lee, unhappy that you played both games instead of the previously agreed one match."

"When you got back to England did he spank you and send you to your room?"

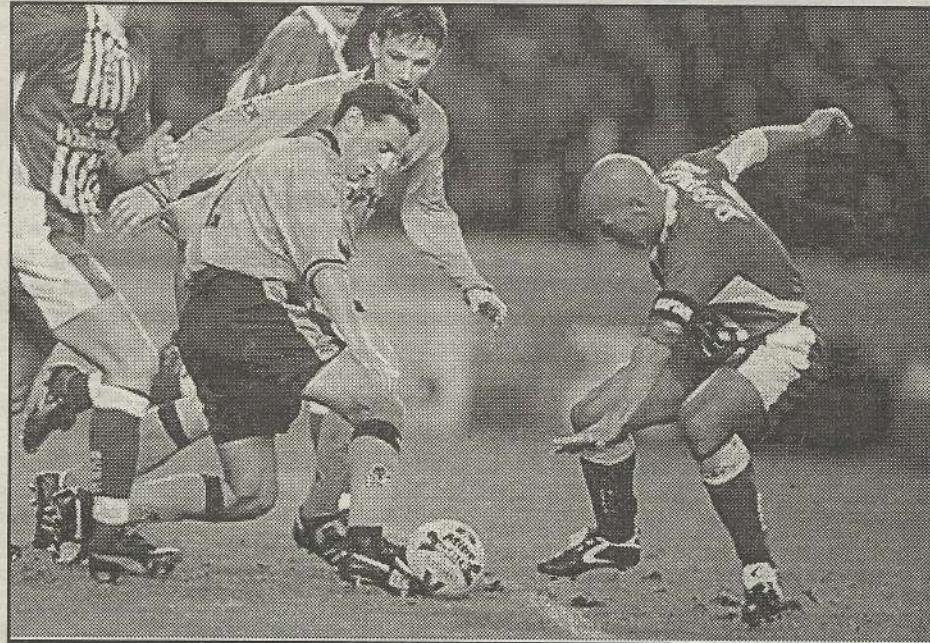
Muscat: "Well, not me personally, but he was not happy. When Steve Corica and I arrived back to England, we went directly to training because he wanted to see what condition we were in. Thankfully, as it turned out, I played the following Saturday."

"He wasn't happy because apparently there was some agreement made, of which I knew nothing about, that I was not to play in the second game at the MCG."

"But I would've never allowed national coach Frank Farina to leave me out of that game; I wanted to play in my home town and it was as simple as that. With regards to the games in Chile, Frankie has contacted my manager, Colin Lee and, between them, they have reached an agreement that I would not play in that series."

"So, I am glad that they could work it out between them rather than having the player make that decision. I am not happy about the fact that I am missing an opportunity to win another three caps for my country but, at the end of the day, Wolves are my employers."

"If my employers can work things out with the national coach without my involvement, then I see that as the best solution."



Muscat barges his way through Birmingham City's defence during a Nationwide Division One game this season.

Diegos: "It was handbags at ten paces last season when you and the tempestuous Ian Wright clashed in a spiteful 1-1 draw between Nottingham Forest and Wolves.

"He called you a 'nobody' and you told him to 'grow up' in the press conference after the game."

"Have you kissed and made up and were you surprised that he didn't take kindly to the 'Muscat vice-like Western Suburbs squirrel grip'?"

Muscat: "No, we haven't really kissed and made up. (Wright) was unhappy after he 'got some of his own back' during the after-match press conference."

"I do admire him for what he has achieved. He is a tremendous player who has scored many goals in his career. He is getting an OBE from the Queen, which proves in itself, that he has accomplished a great deal."

"What was unfortunate was not so much what happened during the game - you can understand that both teams want to win - but what happened afterwards, in the media."

"However, since his move to Celtic we have been able to pass on some interesting messages to each other through Mark Viduka. Let's just say the communication lines are still open."

Diegos: "Thanks Kevin. Let's hope that you can help the 'Golden Tit' achieve his ultimate goal in life: a size 44B-cup wonder bra and a place in the English Premier League. Adios amigo."

Muscat: "Thanks Diegos. It's true that some have said that we have gone 'topless' in the past but I'm sure the Premier league will fix all that. Adios Diegos."

E-Mail 'The Diegos' on FourDiegos@bigpond.com



Stereo 974 FM in Melbourne THE FOUR DIEGOS

Sat 10am to midday

This week's guests ...
A selection of Aussies abroad and the best of Australia

"Compulsory listening for Melbourne's sports public," says Inside Soccer's Aidan Ormond

Muscat: "I f-----g luv ya big guy!"
Viduka: "Get off me!"

some consistency we can consolidate our efforts."

Diegos: "A former teammate and good friend of yours, Coventry City's Robbie Keane, is currently setting the English Premier League alight with his electrifying performances. His form has been so good that Inter Milan has reportedly expressed interest in gaining his services."

Has his success surprised you?"

Muscat: "Fortunately, Coventry is not too far away from Wolverhampton so I still do get to see a lot of Robbie. He certainly is still a very good mate of mine. When he was at Wolves, he lived nearby and, being a single lad, he would quite often be here for a pre-match meal, so my wife is trying to take some credit for his



AYTEK GENC

Speaking from experience



By Roger Sleeman

When Aytek Genc was playing for Parramatta Eagles in an NSL match against Sydney United during the 1992/93 campaign he received a pass from Michael Reda and shook off all defenders in a mazy sixty metre run before coolly slotting the ball under the body of an advancing Zelko Kalac.

This amazing individual goal put Australian football on notice it would be losing another of its star players to an overseas destination.

In fact it was one of his former mentors, the former Marconi maestro, Raul Carizzo, who enticed Genc to join the exodus to Malaysian football in March 1994 when he signed for Johor.

Apart from two loan periods at Sydney United, Genc played five seasons in Malaysia but due to the ban on foreign players by the Malaysian government, Genc returned to Australia at the end of the 1998 season and decided to take a much needed break from football.

However, Dave Ratcliffe was well aware of Genc's ability and signed him for the current season at Sydney United.

In this interview with Roger Sleeman, Genc discusses life in Malaysian football, his experiences in Australian football and his thoughts about the progress of the

would you have stayed if you could?

AYTEK GENC

It's a real change to playing here because in Malaysia football is a religion and you are made to feel like a footballer. I was well known in Malaysia but in Australia the game still doesn't command a high profile.

Also, the game is fully professional in Malaysia while in Australia there are only a few clubs which could be considered as fully professional set-ups.

If the Asian economic crisis hadn't occurred, I would still be playing in Malaysia because football in Malaysia has the same status as rugby league in N.S.W. and the financial rewards while not being as attractive as Europe, were still very good.

R.S. What are your impressions of the standard of the NSL and how does it compare with Malaysia?

A.G. There are four or five good teams in the NSL who would compare favourably with some of the great teams I played with at Parramatta Eagles and Sydney United.

It's just as difficult to play in the NSL but they're aren't as many good players as before. When I played for the Eagles we had Soper, Spiteri and Wheatley who were capable of the unexpected and the Sydney United 1997 Grand Final combi-

ple were entertained but at the moment technical levels in the game are lower and the football isn't as attractive for the paying customer.

In Malaysia, technical skills are much higher and the players have a much greater understanding of their role within a team system.

The game may be less physical in Malaysia but teams love to attack so it's rare that supporters aren't entertained to the fullest.

Therefore, if you measure standards in terms of technical skills, team and tactical preparation, the Malaysian game was in better shape than the NSL.

R.S. Why is Sydney United languishing at the bottom of the League ladder?

A.G. The first answer that comes to mind is that it's pretty difficult to replace a winning team in one season.

Dave Ratcliffe started the season with only four experienced players in myself, Kupresak, Podeljak and Hughes and had to assemble the rest of the squad with limited resources which could only mean signing inexperienced players.

Nevertheless, we've lost quite a few matches by the odd goal but that was clearly due to inexperience in the squad. In our last match against Marconi we dominated and should've scored four or five goals but after leading 1-0, we conceded some soft goals to lose 2-1.

The continual talk about the reduction of the N.S.L. to twelve teams hasn't exactly provided stability but in the end the players are responsible for the team's results.

R.S. Should Dave Ratcliffe still be employed as coach?

A.G. The Sydney United board made a decision which they believed was in the best interests of the club but maybe the decision was hastened by Soccer Australia's intentions to drop four teams from the League.

Unfortunately for Ratcliffe, his sacking may have been premature in light of the likely postponement of the twelve team league to 2001/2002.

In fairness to Ratcliffe, he had to build a team from nothing and could quite easily have put ten men behind the ball and obtained draws in many matches but while he was coach he insisted we play attacking football rather than play for results like some teams do week in week out.

When you're only training three nights a week it's pretty hard for any coach to achieve a great understanding between players and often the players were unaware of their roles.

It's a bit of a lottery when you go out from week to week not knowing whether you'll have a good game or not and when the players around you still lack the experience to be consistent performers.

In Malaysia I knew I could play well every week because under a professional setup we were totally prepared, physically mentally, technically and tactically. We were always thinking football but how can you do that when you only train three nights a week?

R.S. Your position in the NSL is hard to fathom when you consider you have players with such flair as Podeljak and Bolevski. Are these players being used to



Sydney United's experienced midfielder Aytek Genc holds off Marconi's Kim earlier this season.

full advantage?

A.G. There have been games like the home match against Parramatta Power when these two players stood out and we still lost 2-1 and deserved at least a draw.

In our home match against Sydney Olympic, Bolevski came on as a substitute in the second half and scored a magnificent goal in our 2-0 defeat of the League leaders.

These players must have defined roles if they are to be more effective. Podeljak is best when he's attacking opponents in their defensive third rather than playing deep and having to be a ball carrier.

He has a tremendous shot on both feet so we really need him sitting in behind the twin strikers so he has more shots on the target and can support them more in an offensive role.

Bolevski has been hampered by suspension and injury this season, but he really is an impact player.

He could be a great goal poacher but prefers to score spectacular goals outside the penalty area rather than feed on the simple chances in the six yard box.

If Ivan Petkovic can instill in him the importance of scoring goals from any position, Bolevski can become a prolific goalscorer.

R.S. Can Ivan Petkovic reverse the team's fortunes for the remainder of the season?

A.G. If the man's pedigree as a courageous player means anything he has every chance.

Since he took over the coaching reins his professionalism and intense attitude have been an inspiration to the players and our unlucky 1-0 loss to the Kingz was a reflection of the hard work he had put in for the team.

We have thirteen rounds to play so I'm sure Petkovic will be using every bit of his vast experience to assist the team to climb the ladder in building a platform for better results in 2000/2001.



Aytek Genc against Carlton. The Puma believes that coach Ivan Petkovic should be able to help United back to some winning form. 0

game.

ROGER SLEEMAN.

What's it like playing in the N.S.L. again after your stint in Malaysia and

nation included Kalac, Marusic, Zdrilic and Milicic who are all plying their trade overseas now.

In my early years in the N.S.L. peo-

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE - ROUND TWENTY TWO

NORTHERN SPIRIT v BRISBANE STRIKERS

1	John Perosh
2	Robert Enes
3	Matthew Langdon
4	Matthew Bingley
5	Mark Rudan
6	Luke Casserley
7	Robbie Slater
8	Tony Perinich
9	David Seal
10	Nicola Berti
11	Troy Cranney
12	Simon Catanzaro
13	Philip Moss
14	Shane Lyons
15	Anthony Faria
17	Paul Bilokapic
18	Paul Wearne
20	Jess Van Stratten
21	Michael Cunico
22	Paul Henderson
23	Adam Snyder
24	Elvis Olic
25	Ryan Griffiths
26	Jack Sobczyk
27	Adam Griffiths
28	Abbas Saad
30	Sean Cranney
31	Michael Prentice



1	Clint Bolton
2	Glenn Gwynne
3	Shane Stefanutto
4	Andrew Davidson
5	Matthew Belli
6	Brad Ditton
7	Shane Smeltz
8	David Pilic
9	Paul Foster
10	Wayne Srhoj
11	Greg Di Losa
12	Pete Dwyer
13	Stuart McClaren
14	Jade North
15	Leo Langone
16	Peter Grierson
17	Jeromy Harris
18	Nick Meredith
19	Wade Baldwin
20	Daniel Duke



ADELAIDE FORCE v PERTH GLORY

1	Vilson Knezevic
2	Carlo Talladira
3	Ivan Zelic
4	Alex Tobin
5	Damian Mori
6	Carl Veart
7	Nick Sabljak
8	Aurelio Vidmar
9	Nathan Day
10	John Fusco
11	Michael Cartwright
12	Louis Brain
13	Matthew Kemp
14	Angelo Costanzo
15	Bradley Hassell
16	Dong Ki Kim
17	Atilio Hornjik
18	Jonathan Lihou
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	



1	Tom Tomich
2	Robert Trajkovski
3	Jamie Harnwell
4	Vinko Buljubasic
5	Gareth Naven
6	Scott Miller
7	Troy Halpin
8	Alistair Edwards
9	Bobby Despotoski
10	Kasey Wehrman
11	Peter Buljan
12	Jamos Afkos
13	Dion Valle
14	Edgar Junior
15	Con Boutsianis
16	Vas Kalogeracos
17	Hamilton Thorp
18	John Carbone
19	Tony Franken
20	Ivan Ergic
21	Ljubo Milicevic
22	Jason Petkovic
23	Aaron Cole
24	Gary Faria
25	



Venue: North Sydney Oval - Friday 18 February 2000 7.30PM
 Head to Head: Played 4 Spirit wins: 0 Strikers wins: 2 Draws 2
 Last Week: Spirit 4-1 away loss to Breakers
 Strikers 0-0 home draw with Cosmos

Venue: Hindmarsh Stadium - Friday 18 February 2000 8.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 9 Force wins: 2 Glory wins: 4 Draws 3
 Last Week: Force 1-0 away loss to Power
 Glory 2-2 home draw with Knights

FOOTBALL KINGZ v NEWCASTLE BREAKERS

1	Michael Utting
2	Che Bunce
3	Riki Van Steeden
4	Fabio Macolino
5	Jonathon Perry
6	Marcus Stergiopoulos
7	Wynton Rufer
8	Chris Jackson
9	Fred de Jong
10	Dino Mennillo
11	Robbie Middleby
12	Harry Ngata
13	Levent Osman
14	Batum Suri
15	Ivan Vichelich
16	Lee Jones
17	Mark Elrick
18	Stuart Riddle
19	Leigh Kenyon
20	Jason Batty
21	David Moya
22	Aaron Silva
23	Simon Eddy
24	Ross Nicholson



1	Bob Catlin
2	Shane Pryce
3	Andrew Roberts
4	Adam Sanderson
5	Todd McManus
6	Glenn Sprod
7	Travis Dodd
8	Mark Wilson
9	Chris Tancheski
10	John Buonavoglia
11	Luke Tomich
12	Robert Angievski
13	Brad Wieczorek
14	Greg Owens
15	Joshua Ferguson
16	Vasko Trpevski
17	Paul Wheeler
18	Andrew Harper
19	Chad Mansley
20	Bradley Swancott
21	Peter Juchniewicz
22	Glen Moore
23	Damien Smith



Venue: Westpac Trust Stadium, Wellington - Saturday 19 Feb 2000 3.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 1 Kingz wins: 0 Breakers wins: 0 Draws 1
 Last week: Kingz 1-3 away win over South Melbourne
 Breakers 4-1 home win over Spirit

GIPPSLAND FALCONS v SOUTH MELBOURNE

1	Bojo Jevdjevic
2	Dean Fak
3	Manny Gotis
4	Mehmed Durakovic
5	Jeff Hopkins
6	Brian MacNichol
7	Andy Vargas
8	Clayton Bell
9	Robbie Puca
10	Sandy Robertson
11	John Hutchinson
12	Peter Kakos
13	Adrian Savage
14	Doug Marcina
15	Jonathon Buhugiar
16	Juan Nilo
17	Michael Katz
18	Igor Mandic
19	Simon Miotto
20	Ben Cassar
21	



1	Milan Udvaracz
2	Steve Iosifidis
3	Fausto de Amicis
4	Nick Orlic
5	Con Blatsis
6	David Clarkson
7	Steve Panopoulos
8	Vaughan Coveny
9	Paul Trimboli
10	Michael Curcija
11	John Anastasiadis
12	Richie Alagich
13	Adrian Cuzzupe
14	Anthony Magnacca
15	Goran Lozanovski
16	George Goutzoulis
17	Jim Tsekinis
18	Robert Liparoti
19	Tasos Psonis
20	Chris Jones
21	Rade Culbirk
22	Mustafa Mustafa
23	Chris Roche
24	Andy Vlahos
25	



Venue: Falcons Stadium - Saturday 19 February 2000 6.30PM
 Head to Head: Played 18 Falcons: 0 South wins: 13 Draws 5
 Last week: Falcons 0-1 away win over Sydney United
 South 1-3 home loss to Kingz

MARCONI STALLIONS v SYDNEY UNITED

1	Michael Turnbull
2	Chad Gibson
3	Mark Babic
4	
5	Dominic Longo
6	Pan-Keum Kim
7	Christian Care
8	Darren McDonald
9	Zeljko Babic
10	Brad Maloney
11	Mike Smith
12	
13	Danny Invincible
14	Buddy Farah
15	Pierluigi di Gia
16	Alex Duric
17	Francis Awaritefe
18	Harry Karl
19	Brendan Renaud
20	David Aceski
21	Paolo Marchesini
22	Kris Trajanovski
23	Viado Zoric
24	Josala Junior Sauturaga
25	Daniel Severino
26	



1	John Crawley
2	Ray Younis
3	Mark Racker
4	Velimir Kupresak
5	Eddie Bosnar
6	Vince Savocca
7	Mirko Jurilj
8	Nahuel Arrarte
9	Mario Jermen
10	

LIVE FRIDAY 18 FEBRUARY 7.30

C7 SPORT CHANNEL 13

CANBERRA COSMOS V PARRAMATTA POWER



COSMOS

1 David Millin
2 Toplica Popovich
3 Danny Burt
4 Nicholas Purdue
5 Jason Polak
6 David Winnie
7 Daniel Watkins
8 Alex Castro
10 Michael Musitano
11 David Arranz
12 Brian Hamilton
13 Harry James
15 Glen Kolpak
16 Ilija Prenzozski
17 Robbie Hooker
18 Nikola Mrdja
19 Geoff Howarth
20 Grant Barlow
21 Scott Conlon
22 Elliot Zwangobani
23 Andrew Clark
24 PJ Roberts
25 Ivo De Jesus (below)
26 Gabriel Gonzalez
30 Angelo Konstantinou

POWER

1 Andrew Crews
2 David Barrett
3 Michael Santalab
4 Steve Eagleton
5 Richard Plesa
6 Joe Vrkic
7 Jacob Burns
8 Walter Ardone
9 Mile Sterjovski
10 Joel Griffiths
11 Steve Berry
12 Stephen Laybutt
13 Milan Blagojevic
14 John Angelucci
15 Danny Townsend
16 Mark Byrnes
17 Danny Kukucka
18 Lachlan Campbell
19 Matt Thompson
20 Barney Smith
21 Ahmid Elrich
23 John Gibson
28 Peter Bennett
29 Mike Gibson

WOLVES

1 Leslie Pogliacomi
2 George Souris
3 Alvin Ceccoli
4 Robert Stanton
5 David Cervinksi
6 Matthew Horsley (below)
7 Paul Reid
8 Anthony Surjan
9 Sasho Dimoski
10 Stuart Young
11 Scott Chipperfield
12 Neil Harlock
13 Noel Spencer
14 Saso Petrovski
15 David Huxley
16 Peter Lahanas
17 Esala Masi
18 Chad Bishop
19 Paul Dimech
20 Daniel Berlirame
21 Christian Zelvis

OLYMPIC

1 Jim Kourtis
2 Scott Thomas
3 Chris Zoricich
4 Peter Tsekenis
5 Scott Baillie
6 Ante Juric
7 Zlatko Arambasic
8 Marcus Phillips
9 Pablo Cardozo
10 Brett Emerton
11 Chris Kalantzis
12 Sebastian Sinozic
13 Gabriel Mendez
15 Lindsay Wilson
16 Paul Kohler
18 John Kyriazopoulos
19 Nick Carle
20 George Bouhoustos
21 Lee Miot
22 Pete Zorbas
23 Dylan Macallister
24 Norman Tome
25 Hussein Jomaa
26 Adam Ciantar
30 John Karoubas



Venue: Bruce Stadium
Friday 18 February 7.30PM

Head-to-Head:

1

Cosmos: 1

Power: 0

Draws: 0

Last Week: Cosmos 0-0 away draw with Strikers
Power 1-0 home win over Force



Venue: Brandon Park
Sunday 20 February 6.30PM

Head to Head:

40

Wolves: 9

Olympic: 21

Draws: 10

Last Week: Wolves 2-2 away draw with Olympic
Olympic 2-2 home draw with Wolves



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